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WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN WESTERN BALKANS

WOMEN IN POLITICS, GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND SECURITY FOR WOMEN
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA,
KOSOVO, MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA 2018

 **KVINNA**
KVINNA

ABOUT THE KVINNA TILL KVINNA FOUNDATION

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation supports women in war and conflict affected regions, to increase women's power and influence. We support more than 100 women's organisations in five regions of conflict in their work for women's rights and peace.
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ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Women's Rights in Western Balkans is written for the programme "Strengthening Women's Rights, Participation and Influence in the Western Balkans 2015 - 2019". This programme is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and implemented by the *Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation* in cooperation with women's civil society organisations in the Western Balkans. It includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

The overall objective of the programme is to strengthen women's rights and women's equal participation in decision-making in the Western Balkans, with the specific objective of gendering the EU accession.

Women's Rights in Western Balkans serves as a benchmark for the six Western Balkans accession countries regarding women's rights and influence, for comparisons over time. This is the third edition of the report. The three areas included in this benchmark are women in politics, gender-based violence and the situation for women human rights defenders, as these are the priority areas for advocacy within the regional programme. These areas were selected, defined, and described in the first Women's Rights in Western Balkans report, written in the first edition in 2016. The scope of the current edition is to update relevant 2017/18 statistics and resources for each of the indicators, in each of the six Western Balkan countries. For each of the indicators, the authors tested the 2017/18 numbers/figures against earlier ones in order to determine to what extent Western Balkan women's social positions improved or worsened. Women's rights organisations, partner organisations to the *Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation*, have given their input to the report. The responsibility of the content lies however solely with the authors.

The authors recognise that there are limitations in the research and gender benchmarking indicators. Due to the scope of the assignment, time-frame and limited resources, the authors developed specific indicators within each of the thematic areas mentioned above. One of the challenges was to limit the number of indicators, as the authors recognise that there are numerous other indicators that could have been used to measure women's social positions. In addition, the research for the third edition was limited to the authors' ability to access updated information online. The biggest barrier was the lack of updated information from official government websites in each of the studied countries. Poor resources in the Western Balkan countries mean that Ministries, government officials, police stations, and civil society organisations are limited in their ability to update information/ literature/websites. Secondly, public access to information in the Western Balkans has also been a challenge, and ultimately one faced by the authors in each of the three editions of this report. Finally, the deadline for the writing of the report was before the elections that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus, the third edition is unable to incorporate the 2018 changes that took place following the post-elections formation of the government.

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% OF REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND/OR IN HIGH POSITIONS WITH DECISION-MAKING POWER

The electoral period of 2016-2018 in the Western Balkans, for presidential, parliamentary and local elections,¹ brought to light varying perceptions of the position of women in politics and decision-making power in this region. On one hand, the number of women in politics has increased; on the other hand, women are still faced with challenges in participating in the political processes, such as gender stereotypes, women's effective representation in leadership positions within quota systems² and within political parties and government positions.



“Bearing in mind the dominance of male power in political parties, it is no surprise that the WB [Western Balkan] governments are also predominantly controlled by men. Kosovo and Bosnia have the lowest number of female ministers, only two. Serbia is the only country that has a female Prime Minister, who nevertheless was not elected by popular vote, nor is she a member of the ruling party.³ Similarly, the former female president of Kosovo also was not elected, but rather appointed. It seems that even when women do occupy the decision-making positions, the power lies somewhere else.”⁴

ALBANIA

Access to funding is particularly important during the nomination stage for potential candidates in Albania. Individuals with access to resources that can be used for political parties or campaigns, and those who are seen to be most loyal to party leaders, are often given priority. Women are often overlooked, even if they are proven leaders and organisers. Thus, the lack of transparency in parties' candidate recruitment and nomination processes, as well as circumvention of the women's wings or other party forums in this process, are some of the factors that shape the current context in this regard.⁵ Women in Albania do not have equal access to positions of political power despite the quota system, as they face barriers before, during, and after the political campaign.

In Albania, surveys ahead of the 2009 elections showed that people were not used to women in positions of power and that a conservative view of women was prevalent in society. Over time, however, in Albania — as well as in other countries — parties nominating women initially rose and soon plateaued, but the proportion of women elected continued rising, without regulatory pressure. This may show the early signs of gender prejudices in the parties diminishing.⁶

¹ Albania – Parliamentary elections in 2017; Bosnia and Herzegovina – Local elections in 2016 and General Elections announced for 7th October 2018 (Election for President, Election for House of Representatives, Election for House of Peoples); Kosovo – Parliamentary elections in 2017, municipal elections in 2017; Macedonia – Parliamentary elections in 2017, municipal elections in 2017; Montenegro – Parliamentary elections in 2016; Presidential elections 2018; Serbia – Presidential elections in 2017

² The quota legislations in Western Balkan countries pertain to legislated candidate quotas during elections (30% Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, 40% BiH), and political party quotas, which set the minimum for the share of women on candidate lists (30% Serbia and Montenegro, 40% BiH and Macedonia and 50% Albania). Kosovo has a different type of quota called “reserved seats” for the proportion of the election list, which is as follows: in each Political Entity's candidate list, at least 30% shall be male and at least 30% shall be female, with one candidate from each gender included at least once in each group of 3 candidates, counting from the first candidate in the list.

³ The Prime Minister was effectively appointed by the President after he assumed the presidential position.

⁴ M. Lazarević & K. Tadić, *Gender Issues in the Western Balkans, Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkans Summit Series* (Policy Brief), 2018, <http://wb-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CSF-PB-04-Gender-Issues-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁵ ‘Funding for Women Candidates’, *iKNOWPOLITICS*, <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss/e-discussions/funding-women-candidates>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁶ ‘International IDEA's International Women's Day 2018 Series: Gender-Targeted Public Funding to Support Women in Politics’, *iKNOWPOLITICS*, <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/news/partner-news/international-ideas-international-womens-day-2018-series-gender-targeted-public>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Many women entering politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are faced with a number of obstacles relating to stereotypes of women's roles being family-oriented and caretaking rather than public. As party members, women have been excluded from important political decision-making processes of the parties and do not receive opportunities to make significant contributions to their party or to policies. During the elections, women rarely have leading positions on the electoral lists and often are promoted in smaller communities in which they have low chances of being elected. Because of such exclusions, many progressive female politicians in BiH are pushed out from the political scene despite their immense contribution to the democratization of BiH society.⁷

The Central Election Commission recently published certified lists of candidates of political parties for the general elections in BiH on 7 October 2018.⁸ Among other things, the public's attention was drawn to a very small percentage of women who were, by decisions of party organs, set as holders of the electoral lists. The percentage is only 16% of the total number of holders' list.⁹

KOSOVO

"We know that when corruption flourishes, the effects are felt disproportionately by women, so we need to redouble our efforts to make sure women's voices are heard, and that women are no longer relegated to the side-lines of Kosovo's political and economic life."

-United States Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Colleen Hyland¹⁰

Different factors obstruct women from active political participation in Kosovo, and these barriers often do not uphold, or simply go against, the importance of legal instruments, such as mandatory quotas and the Law on Gender Equality. According to a recent comparative study of women representation in politics in Southern Europe, mandatory quotas are largely affected by the cultural and historical past of the region. A report from the Kosovo Gender Studies Centre identified mentality and party clientelism as factors that hinder the role of women in politics. Kosovar society is characterised by patriarchal elements that undermine the inclusion of women in politics.

The United Nations (UN) commented on common obstacles in Kosovo, such as a lack of financial resources, greater family responsibilities, and the emergence of political elites who are generally men that come from wealth and as such, use their financial contributions as a leverage for control within the party. As of 2017, the World Bank reported that the employment rate held by women in Kosovo was 13.1%, compared to 47.4% for men.¹¹ By comparing trends in employment in Kosovo, the data indicates that employment rates for women and men are rising, but the large gender gap in these rates remains. Women in Kosovo do not have access to an equal environment where they can effectively contribute to politics and decision-making, if foundational conditions such as the gender gap in employment are not changed.¹²

MACEDONIA

Out of 120 deputies in Macedonia, 46 are women, and according to Cvetanka Ivanova, Secretary General of the Macedonian Parliament, women are often included in outdated discussions that are deemed as non-priorities and of less importance.¹³ This indicates that women are not in priority decision-making positions within the government.

Ivana Jordanovska, Member of the Foreign Policy Department, added that obstacles for young Macedonian women in politics are still numerous: "Throughout my work experience, I've had numerous negative episodes that men in politics rarely or never encounter. I've been told I'm bitchy when I fight for a policy. Talking about my work makes me a 'vain' self-promoter, while it's acceptable for my male colleagues to do the same. There's no way to win when it comes to the simplest things, like apparel. Wearing a suit makes you too masculine, but wearing a dress makes you flirty, which automatically makes you less serious. Having a boyfriend makes you an unreliable colleague since you might decide to marry and have kids, or move away."¹⁴ Jordanovska's experience as a Member of Parliament is not an outlier experience, but is shared with other women in public in the Western Balkans.

⁷ M. Abadžija, 'Edita Miftari: Žene u Partijama Nemaju Stvarnu Moć', *Oslobođenje*, 21 May 2018, <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/edita-miftari-zene-u-partijama-nemaju-stvarnu-moc-364836>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁸ Results were still pending during the writing of this report.

⁹ Čarkadžić, D., 'Mizeran Broj Žena kao Nositeljica Listana Izborima 2018. Godine', *Istinomjer*, 14 August 2018, <http://istinomjer.ba/mizeran-broj-zena-kao-nositeljica-lista-na-izborima-2018-godine/>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

¹⁰ National Democratic Institute [NDI], 'Ready for Women's Political Leadership in Kosovo', *National Democratic Institute*, 28 March 2018, <https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/ready-womens-political-leadership-kosovo>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

¹¹ SEE Jobs Gateway, based on data provided by national statistical offices and Eurostat, cited in World Bank 2017 Q2.

¹² R. Dema & A. Morina, 'Kosovo Highlights Limited Impact of Mandatory Quotas for Women in Government', *Utica College Centre of Public Affairs and Election Research*, <https://www.ucpublicaffairs.com/home/2017/9/5/kosovo-highlights-limited-impact-of-mandatory-quotas-for-women-in-government-by-aldisa-morina>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

¹³ 'Žene u BiH još Uvijek su Kvota, a ne Demokratska Svijest', *Dnevni List*, 17 September 2018, <https://dnevni-list.ba/zene-u-bih-jos-uvijek-su-kvota-a-ne-demokratska-svijest/>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

¹⁴ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Political Trends & Dynamics in Southeast Europe (Briefing, December 2017 - January 2018)*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/12902/2017-12-2018-01.pdf>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

Although women in the Western Balkan countries participate in politics and decision-making at all levels, including in different functions of government, as candidates for national or local elections, Members of Parliament (MPs) and local councils, and as voters, the UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 5.5 that addresses women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership in the political public life is a goal that has not yet been achieved in the region.¹⁵

The general trend however, regarding representation, seems positive. Statistical data indicates a slight increase in the number of women in politics in Western Balkan countries, with an increase in their greater decision-making power: in 2016 the average percentage of women Members of Parliament was 27%, in 2017 it was 28% and in 2018, at the time of writing this research report, it is 32%. The average percentage of Ministers had increased from 18% in 2016 to 23% in 2017, remaining the same in 2018.



“Women and men should have the same power to shape society and their own lives. The feminist foreign policy is an agenda for change which aims to increase the rights, representation and resources of all women and girls, based on the reality where they live. Bosnia and Herzegovina is not an exception to the global reality that women are chronically underrepresented in political and other decision-making bodies. Put women at the table from the start and you will notice that more issues and perspectives are brought to light” - H.E. Anders Hagelberg, Ambassador of Sweden to BiH.¹⁸

In the Western Balkan countries, Albania has the highest representation of women in ministerial positions, with 50% of female Ministers. In 2018 Macedonia and Montenegro were the two countries in the region that made the greatest progress in both areas of high politics, with increased percentages of women MPs as well as Ministers. For the first time in history, Montenegro had a female presidential candidate. Only one country (Serbia) has a woman as Speaker in the Parliament.

ALBANIA

Both the proportion of women as candidates and the number of elected MPs have significantly increased since the legal reform to the quota system. Gender-targeted public funding accompanied by a significant impact on non-compliant political parties may have played a role in changing the landscape for women and men in the Albanian Parliament. The next parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2020, and a goal of the Albanian National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016–2020 is that 40% of the less-represented gender will be elected to the Albanian Parliament.¹⁶

MACEDONIA

In Macedonia, there are currently more women in decision-making posts than in previous years. The barriers and challenges that women have faced in accessing decision-making power, however, still remain. As with other Western Balkan countries, many key political posts in Macedonia have never been held by a woman. There is a pattern in the type of ministries that are usually headed by women, such as Ministry of labour or culture. For example, a woman has never held the position of Minister of Finance. On the other hand, there are some positive examples to be noted. Radmila Sekerinska, the Minister of Defence is an example of a woman who is the head of a ministry that has traditionally been considered within a “male” domain of politics. Additionally, Sekerinska is a veteran of Macedonian politics. If one was to measure the average number of years of active involvement of women and men in politics in the region, one will see that women in general have much shorter spans/terms in office than men. This is a problem because it means they rarely make it into the final rounds for the most prestigious positions, which are often held by people with the highest number of years of involvement and experience.¹⁷

¹⁵ ‘Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls’, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>, (accessed 21 October 2018).

¹⁶ M. Ohman, *Gender-Targeted Public Funding for Political Parties: A Comparative Analysis*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm, Sweden, 2018, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/gender-targeted-public-funding-for-political-parties.pdf>, (accessed 2 October 2018), p. 33.

¹⁷ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Political Trends & Dynamics in Southeast Europe (Briefing, December 2017 - January 2018)*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/12902/2017-12-2018-01.pdf>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

¹⁸ ‘Empowerment of Women in Politics and Support to Sustainable Development Goals Roll-out and Private Sector Engagement - New Projects Financed by the Government of Sweden and Implemented by the UN in BiH’, *United Nations Development Programme*, 2017, http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/presscenter/articles/2017/11/30/two-new-projects-to-put-focus-on-gender-equality-and-sdgs-in-bih.html, (accessed 2 October 2018).

MONTENEGRO

Some progress in policies towards more gender equal representation in politics have been made in Montenegro, including amendments to the Law on Election of Members of Parliament through the introduction of a quota of 40% of the total candidates to be of the less-represented gender, amendments to the Law on Financing of Political Parties through the introduction of financial incentives for the parties in the form of more funding, in favour of parties with additional women.¹⁹ MPs as well as financial support to women's organisations within parties and amendments to the Law on Political Parties through the obligation to provide mechanisms for gender-balanced representation in the party.²⁰

In March 2018, Draginja Vuksanović, an MP for the Social Democratic Party, announced her candidacy for the upcoming presidential election. She was nominated by the Social Democratic Party and supported by the Democratic Alliance, as the first female presidential candidate in the history of Montenegro. Vuksanović came third in the election, winning 8.2% of the votes.²¹

"Politics was not a man's job even when women did not have the right to vote... Montenegro has always been a place of exceptional, traditional respect for women, be they mothers, sisters, wives, daughters... Today, the time is ripe for women to take responsibility in many areas of life in our country, to be successful scientists, artists, journalists, leading in the NGO sector, public administration, judicial authorities... My candidacy is just another proof that for women in Montenegro there are no limits." – Draginja Vuksanović²²

Recommendations

There is consensus of many different actors that more needs to be done to strengthen women's effective representation in politics and decision-making in the region, particularly in senior positions and leadership roles within political parties and governments. While a strong legislative framework exists to support women's political participation, increased measures will be necessary in order to achieve the goals of the legislation.²³

- Gender quotas should require the alternation of women and men on candidate lists, as well as providing and enforcing effective and proportionate sanctions against non-compliance with such measures²⁴
- Increased commitment of political parties to gender parity: Political parties should take further measures to ensure the conditions for open and fair participation of women in the candidate selection process within the parties²⁵

- There is a need for cultural changes, starting from the private family sphere, to address the patriarchal mentality that is a major barrier to women's political participation

- The importance of political determination by the government to implement existing laws on gender equality and address electoral reforms to promote gender equality²⁶

- In some countries, for example Kosovo, measures will be necessary in order to align the gender quotas set out under the election-related laws with the Law on Gender Equality²⁷

- There is a need for engagement with men and young boys in challenging and resisting patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes to achieve change²⁸

¹⁹ This is in reference to being in favour of increased gender equality through affirmative actions for the less-represented gender, which the authors have already outlined here to be women.

²⁰ United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] Gender Programme Montenegro, 'Women's Political Network in the EU Delegation: To Increase the Political Participation of Women', 2018, <http://www.gendermontenegro.com/women-s-political-network/activities/451-to-increase-the-political-participation-of-women>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

²¹ 'Draginja Vuksanović', *Revolvy*, <https://www.revolvy.com/page/Draginja-Vuksanovic%C4%87>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

²² M. Obrenović, 'Draginja Vuksanović: Politika Odavno Nije Muški Posao', *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 8 April 2018, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/draginja-vuksanovic-politika-odavno-nije-muski-posao>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] & Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights [ODIHR], *Republic of Albania: Parliamentary Elections 25 June 2017 (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report)*, Warsaw, Poland, 2017, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/346661?download=true>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

²⁵ OSCE, Head of Presence's Remarks for Women in Politics Conference, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/presence-in-albania/385797?download=true>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

²⁶ 'UN Global Open Day Addresses Women's Political Participation in Kosovo', United Nations Mission in Kosovo, 2018, <https://unmik.unmissions.org/un-global-open-day-addresses-women%E2%80%99s-political-participation-kosovo>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ 'Final Report: 2018 UN Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security; Focus on Women's Political Participation in Kosovo', *United Nations Peacekeeping*, 2018, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/final-report-2018-un-global-open-day-women-peace-and-security-focus-womens-political-participation>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

STATISTICAL DATA SHOWS:

ELECTED PARLIAMENTS/ ASSEMBLIES²⁹

1

On the level of National Parliaments there is only one women Head of Parliament (Serbia)

32%

The average percentage of women MPs is 32% (Albania 30%, BiH 21%, Kosovo 31%, Macedonia 38%, Montenegro 24%, Serbia 38%)



There are no women presidents of Regional Assemblies in any of the Western Balkan countries

POLITICAL EXECUTIVES

1

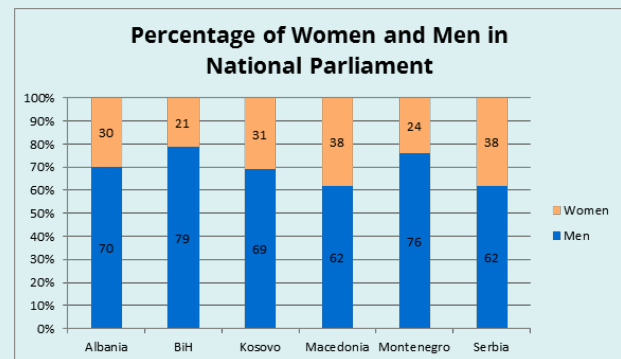
There is only one women Prime Minister of National Government (Serbia)

23%

The average percentage of women Ministers is 23% (Albania 50%, BiH 22%, Kosovo 5%, Macedonia 18%, Montenegro 25%, Serbia 19%)

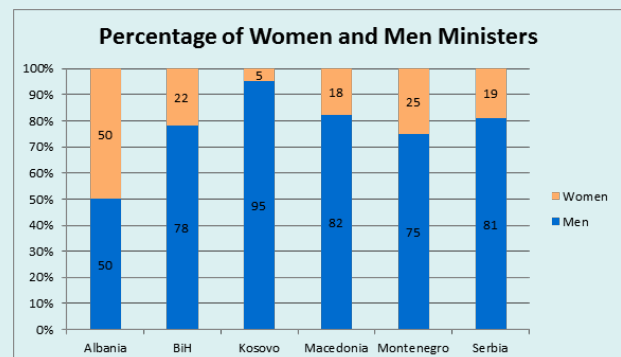
Percentage of Women and Men in National Parliament³⁰

	Number of women	Number of men	Total number of seats	Percentage of women (%)	Percentage of men (%)
Albania	40	80	120	30	60
BiH	9	33	42	21	79
Kosovo ³¹	37	83	120	31	69
Macedonia	46	76	120	38	62
Montenegro	19	62	81	24	76
Serbia ³²	94	156	250	38	62



Percentage of Women and Men Ministers

	Number of women	Number of men	Total number of seats	Percentage of Women (%)	Percentage of Men (%)
Albania	7	7	14	50	50
BiH	2	7	9	22	78
Kosovo ³³	1	20	21	5	95
Macedonia	4	18	22	18	82
Montenegro	4	12	16	25	75
Serbia	4	17	21	19	81



²⁹ 'Women in National Parliaments', Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018, <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, (accessed 24 September 2018).

³⁰ 'Women in National Parliaments: World Average', Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018, <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>, (accessed 21 October 2018).

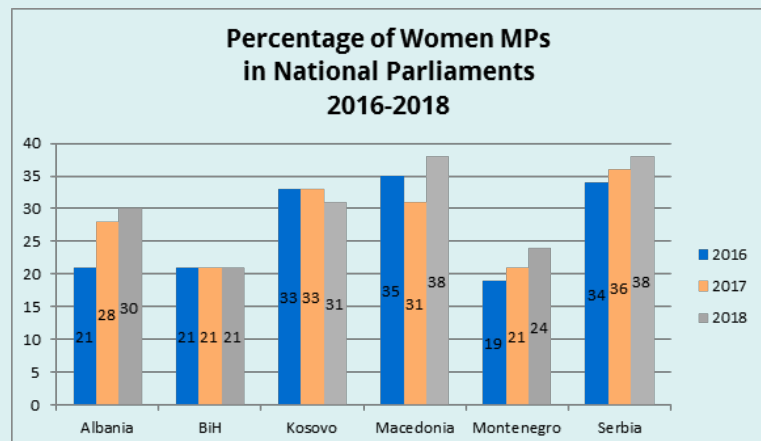
³¹ 'List of the Deputies of the Kosovo Assembly', Republic of Kosovo Assembly, <http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/?cid=2,102>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

³² 'Polna Struktura', Narodna Skupština Republika Srbije, <http://www.parlament.gov.rs>, (accessed 5 October 2018).

³³ 'Ministerstva', Government of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018, <http://vlada.mk/ministerstva>, (accessed 21 October 2018).

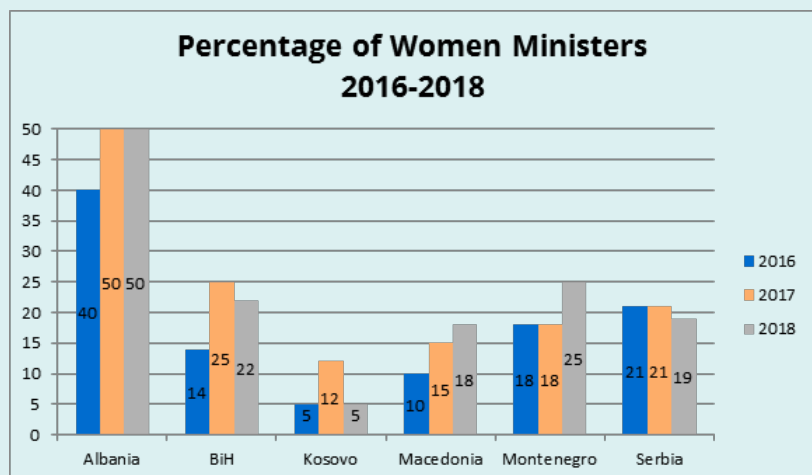
Comparison chart:
Percentage of Women Members of Parliaments
in National Parliaments 2016-2018

	2016	2017	2018
Albania	21	28	30
BiH	21	21	21
Kosovo	33	33	31
Macedonia	35	31	38
Montenegro	19	21	24
Serbia	34	36	38



Comparison chart:
Percentage of Women Ministers 2016-2018

	2016	2017	2018
Albania	40	50	50
BiH	14	25	22
Kosovo	5	12	5
Macedonia	10	15	18
Montenegro	18	18	25
Serbia	21	21	19



% OF REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN LOCAL/MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

In terms of the participation of women in municipal politics, the situation in the Western Balkans has changed only minimally compared to previous years. The average number of women mayors increased from 5.8% in 2016 and 2017, to 7.5% in 2018. The average number of women councillors in Local Self-Governments has increased from 29.3% to 31.6%.

Despite the fact that in recent years most Western Balkan countries had local elections,³⁴ visible and significant increases in women's participation in politics at the local level is slow and still faces many political, socio-economic and cultural barriers, including non-implementation of the quota system at the local level, challenges to women's inclusion within the party and government, stereotypes and prejudices in society as well as lack of adequate promotion of mechanisms for gender equality at the municipal level. The quota system of both electoral legislation and participation in government is not sustainable; there is a very low percentage of women on the election lists, and in most of the Western Balkan countries, a quota of 30% is not proposed for the least represented gender at the level of councillors. On a municipal level, women are mostly elected for lower positions in their local governments.

ALBANIA

At the local level, obstacles to women's representation are widespread in Albania, and include for example that women's freedom to run for office is not regarded a priority; legal obstacles are present, with women placed in a less competitive positions at party lists and women's quotas functioning poorly; women struggle to wage their political campaigns, facing threats and lacking rights to express grievances about the electoral process. The implementation of the clauses on women's quotas show severe obstacles: women receive fewer electoral resources than men and have fewer donors, there is a sense that women candidates who file complaints are treated less fairly, and gender stereotypes are widespread and negative regarding the role that women can play as representatives.³⁵

The 2015 amendments to the Electoral Code made it mandatory to have minimum 10% of candidates running for mayors in the municipal election from the least-represented gender. Following the elections in December 2017, 15% of the winning candidates were women and 85% men. Such amendment to the Electoral Code significantly improved the gender representation in decision-making that has taken place since Albania's transition into democracy. In two years, the mandatory quota was surpassed by 5%, showing a positive, upward trend. The Municipal Council candidate lists in the 2015 municipal elections were composed of 49% women and 51% men, and the 35% of the winning candidates for Municipal Council Adviser positions were women, whereas in 2017, approximately 36% of elected advisers were women.³⁶

Local governments in the Western Balkan region have been negatively impacted by polarisation along party lines. This polarisation compromises accountability of local party leaders, and also marginalises populations aligned with opposition parties. In Albania, women's alliances across party platforms have provided opportunities for more collective action to strengthen the ability of local councils to represent citizen interests. An increase in women's voices at a local level can, for example, lead to greater investment in poorer regions of a municipality, for example. Connecting such women's alliances to community groups can ensure greater representation of women's demands because they are often very different from those of men but are regularly underrepresented.³⁷

³⁴ Albania – Parliamentary elections in 2017; BiH – Local elections in 2016, General elections announced for 7th October 2018 (Election for President, Election for House of Representatives, Election for House of Peoples); Kosovo – Parliamentary elections in 2017, Local elections 2017; Macedonia – Parliamentary elections in 2017, Local elections in 2017; Montenegro – Parliamentary elections in 2016; Presidential elections 2018; Serbia – Presidential elections in 2017

³⁵ S. Whitefield and E. Shabani, *Obstacles to Women's Participation in Elections in Albania*, UN Women Country Office Albania, Tirana, Albania, 2018, http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/PoPE%20National%20Index%20ENG-AL_1.PDF, (accessed 4 October 2018).

³⁶ D. Ibrahimaj, *Women and Men in Albania 2018*, INSTAT, Tirana, Albania, 2018, <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/4349/burra-dhe-gra-ne-shqiperi-2018.pdf>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

³⁷ S. Khan Mohmand, *Making Local Governance Inclusive for the 'Leave No One Behind' Agenda (Briefing Note)*, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Institute of Development Studies, 2018, https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/14034/SDC-IDS%20BriefingNote%2005_Shandana_final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, (accessed 4 October 2018).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Political parties do not recognise the importance of, and obligation to, providing space for women in their parties during elections, before/during campaigns, while creating candidate lists and when appointing individuals to internal key decision-making positions. Bearing in mind that the BiH political system operates with political parties as the main political subjects, several groups are marginalised in the electoral process.

The Women's Network of BiH observed that keeping the current pace and intensity of nominating and electing women in local authorities/bodies, which keeps growing at a rate of 1 to 2% with each election, gender equality, and the full participation of women, will have been achieved by 2060.³⁸

KOSOVO

For the 2017 municipal elections, of 204 mayoral candidates only 4% were women.³⁹ Political party representatives had stated that women's underrepresentation is due in part to women's disinterest in candidacy for the municipal elections. Following the elections, Kosovo currently has 38 mayors, and **none are women**.⁴⁰ By the end of 2017, all existing women mayors finished their mayoral mandates from 2013-2017.⁴¹ Women hold 35% of all municipal assembly seats in Kosovo, and of them, 67% received seats because of the quota, whereas 33% were directly elected. While socialised gender stereotypes suggesting that women are not sufficiently qualified or capable of being political leaders have been used to undermine women's participation in politics, there are several other factors contributing to women's low participation in politics such as: women's unpaid, domestic care activities that limit the time they have available for engaging in politics; an inability to participate in political networking and fundraising events due to family and domestic obligations; and insufficient access to funds for political campaigning.⁴²

MACEDONIA

During the municipal elections of 2017, out of the total 224 mayoral candidates, only 16 were women (7%), whereas 208 were men (93%). One political party did not nominate any women candidates at all, and two parties had only one woman candidate each. Unlike the legal obligation for the parties to promote one third of their candidates from the less represented gender on their lists for councillors, there is no such obligation for mayoral candidates.⁴³

Members of Executive Councils registered on nine lists with fewer than 40% women candidates and 17 lists that did not place women where it was required. Fourteen percent of councils are headed by women, 86% by men.⁴⁴

Biljana Manaskova: "Unfortunately changes to legislation and the introduction of quota system (both for electoral legislation and participation in government and public institutions) have not been sustainable and there is still much to be done... The participation of women in local government has reached 35-40 percent in municipal councils, however when it comes to women mayors... out of the 80 municipalities and City of Skopje, only six municipalities elected women in the 2017 local elections, which represents 7.4 percent. As for the government, more equal participation is urgently needed, as there are only three women ministers (out of 14); this is way too low for a country that has introduced an Equal Opportunity Law in 2006."⁴⁵

Ivana Jordanovska, Member of Foreign Policy Department, Government of Macedonia: "Mr. Zaevis [Prime Minister of Macedonia since May 2017] is the first one to support and stand behind the feminist policies proposed by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Mila Carovska. And having Ms. Carovska, a vowed feminist, in charge of this Ministry speaks volumes. As party president, he supported all the women who ran for mayor in the 2017 elections. So, Bitola, one of the bigger cities in Macedonia, got a woman mayor for the first time. In Makedonska Kamenica, a single mother was elected mayor. And in Aracinovo, a predominantly Albanian municipality, received its first woman mayor, an Albanian running as part of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM). The effect of these elections might be invisible in the present, but it will have a huge impact in the future."⁴⁶

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Melina Halilović is First Romani Woman in Municipal Council in Visoko⁴⁷

Melina Halilović is a Roma youth activist and the first woman Roma member of the Municipal Council in Visoko, BiH. Halilović is fighting discrimination and stereotypes of Roma people, in a country where the constitution only allows candidates for the national tripartite presidency or the national legislature, the House of Peoples, to be Bosniaks, Croats or Serbs, excluding members of all other ethnic groups from positions in high-level government.

³⁸ 'If We Continue at this Pace and Intensity, by 2060 We Could Have a Minimum of 40% of Women in Local Authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Women's Network BiH*, <http://zenskamreza.ba/en/if-we-continue-at-this-pace-and-intensity-by-2060-we-could-have-a-minimum-of-40-of-women-in-local-authorities-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

³⁹ European Commission, *Kosovo FMT: Superscript*/FMT 2018 Report (Commission Staff Working Document)*, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/de/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018SC0156>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁴⁰ N. Farnsworth et al., *Kosovo Gender Analysis*, Kosovo Women's Network, 2018, <http://www.womensnetwork.org/documents/20181003125154894.pdf>, (accessed 26 October 2018).

⁴¹ D. Balii, 'Eight Women Compete for Mayorships in Kosovo's Local Elections', *Prishtina Insight*, 19 October 2017, <https://prishtinainsight.com/women-mayorships-elections-mag/>, (accessed 26 October 2018).

⁴² N. Farnsworth et al., *Kosovo Gender Analysis*, Kosovo Women's Network, 2018, <http://www.womensnetwork.org/documents/20181003125154894.pdf>, (accessed 26 October 2018).

⁴³ J. Dimeski and M. Panovski, *The Republic of Macedonia's 2017 Local Elections Handbook (Second Updated Edition)*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis", Skopje, Macedonia, 2017, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_51203-1522-1-30.pdf?171222104910, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁴⁴ Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, *Observation of Municipal Elections in 'the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (15 October 2017)*, 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/observation-of-municipal-elections-in-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-16807915c5>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁴⁵ 'Women's Political Participation and Violence in Macedonia, Perspectives from Election Management Bodies', *International Foundation for Electoral Systems*, 8 December 2017, <https://www.ifes.org/news/womens-political-participation-and-violence-macedonia-perspectives-election-management-bodies>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁴⁶ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Political Trends & Dynamics in Southeast Europe (Briefing, December 2017 - January 2018)*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/12902/2017-12-2018-01.pdf>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁴⁷ D. Dickens, 'Bosnia: Melina Halilovic is First Romani Woman in Municipal Council in Visoko', *ROMEA*, 23 June 2017, <http://www.romea.cz/en/features-and-commentary/reportage/bosnia-melina-halilovic-is-first-romani-woman-in-municipal-council-in-visoko>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

MONTENEGRO

In Montenegro, the representation of women in leading positions in the executive branches of the municipalities is very low. Only two municipalities have woman Mayors, a title held, in comparison, by 22 men. Out of a total of 38 Deputy Mayors country-wide, in eight municipalities women have the function of Deputy Mayor, compared to the 30 men that hold this position in the other municipalities. In two municipalities, women are Presidents of the Municipal Assemblies. In four local councils, women's representation is over 32%, while in the other municipalities this percentage is at approximately 26.⁴⁸ Only one woman is in the position of President of the Municipal Assembly.⁴⁹

The policy of gender equality at the local level has improved since previous years. In 2016, two Montenegrin municipalities adopted Acts on Gender Equality at a local level, and in one of them, a Council for Gender Equality was established. A Network of Gender Equality Coordinators was formed at the local level and it has been active since 2016 and with a total of 21 members. The results of the implementation of gender equality policies are that in 11 municipalities (out of 23), including the capital of Podgorica, there are local action plans for gender equality; in 12 municipalities, councils for gender equality were formed, and five municipalities have offices for gender equality. Seven municipalities have positioned the budget funds for the implementation of gender equality policies within their budgets.⁵⁰

SERBIA

In Serbia, seven out of 100 Mayors are women, whereas 93 are men. Similarly, only 8.3% of women hold positions as Deputy Mayors; men 91.7%. In municipal and town councils there are 16% women councillors, 84% men, and in as many as 23 municipalities/towns there are no women councillors at all.⁵¹

In appointed positions, as opposed to elected, the situation is different. For example, women hold 57.7% of the positions of Secretary of the Municipality, while men hold 42.3 % and when it comes to the position of Deputy Secretary of the Municipality, women hold a percentage of 64.6 of the positions, men 35.4 in comparison. Approximately half of the municipalities do not have an established body dealing exclusively with gender equality issues. In the Law on Gender Equality, Article 39 stipulates that, among other things, local government units in the framework of existing organisations must have a permanent working body or person hired for gender equality and the performance of the realisation of equal opportunities.⁵²

Recommendations

- Electoral Codes should support equal representation in local elections through mechanisms such as gender quotas in the lists of candidates running for mayors, or through an obligation to have the deputy mayor and mayor of different genders.
- Political parties should hold regular joint sessions with women forums/groups to discuss issues related specifically to gender equality and gender representation.⁵³
- Municipalities, in accordance with their responsibilities, should hire Gender Advisers or Gender Experts for strategic developments in the local community. This would facilitate the creation of equal opportunities for active and equal participation of women and men in decision-making and the creation of local policies, particularly in outlining the priorities of the local community, including priorities of resource-investment.
- Municipal governments should strive to ensure equal representation of women and men in management boards, management structures and management positions in the institutions and bodies that are elected or appointed by the local community.⁵⁴ Active engagement outside of quota systems is crucial for meaningful change.
- To achieve equal conditions for women's participation at the local level will require an active and long-term engagement in creating equal opportunities and access for women to enter into positions with decision-making power.

“The journey to peace building and the Euro-Atlantic integration will be [sped] up if women are empowered to take up their role in decision-making at national and local levels in any country of the Western Balkans, which desperately needs to overcome the consequences of wars and wounds. Women cannot be left outside of political and economic life, because that would mean that we are not using half of the potential of our society for changes we need towards a better future,” – Edita Tahiri, Chair of the Regional Women's Lobby.⁵⁵

During 2018, the City Mayors Foundation⁵⁶ proposed a list of candidates for its World's Best Mayors Of 2018 Award. Among the candidates was Teuta Arifi, Mayor of Tetovo, Macedonia. Arifi is a Macedonian mayor of Albanian descent. She has been the mayor of Tetovo since 2013. She holds an MA in philosophy and a PhD in philology, she also speaks six languages. Before serving as mayor to Tetovo, Arifi served as the Deputy Prime Minister in Macedonia, where she was in charge of European affairs, and the Vice-President of the Democratic Union for Integration. She was also the first woman of Albanian descent elected to Macedonia's parliament.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ N. Drobñjak, and S. Striković, *Rodni Aspekt na Lokalnom Nivou – Priručnik za Lokalne Službenike/ce i Namještenike/ce (Radni Dokument)*, 2017.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ K. Beker et al., *Situation of Rural Women in Serbia Report*, UN Women, Belgrade, Serbia, 2017, http://rs.one.un.org/content/dam/unct/serbia/docs/Publications/Situation%20of%20rural%20women%20in%20Serbia_ENG_final.pdf, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ A. Krasniqi, *Standards of Representation in Political Parties*, UN Women, Tirana, Albania, 2017, <http://isp.com.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/STANDARDS-OF-REPRESENTATION-IN-POLITICAL-PARTIES.pdf>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁵⁴ N. Drobñjak, and S. Striković, *Rodni Aspekt na Lokalnom Nivou – Priručnik za Lokalne Službenike/ce i Namještenike/ce (Radni Dokument)*, 2017.

⁵⁵ Press Release: Local Women Need Voice for Regional and International Peace to Hold', *UN Women*, 1 February 2018, <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/02/press-release-local-women-need-voice-for-regional-and-international-peace-to-hold>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁵⁶ The City Mayors Foundation awards a biennial prize to the best mayors in the world (according to their set of criteria) in order to promote the importance of local government.

⁵⁷ I. Beham, 'The World's Best Mayors of 2018 [List]', *ValueWalk*, 3 August 2018, <https://www.valuwalk.com/2018/08/worlds-best-mayors-of-2018/>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

STATISTICAL DATA SHOWS:

WOMEN MAYORS IN LOCAL/MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

15

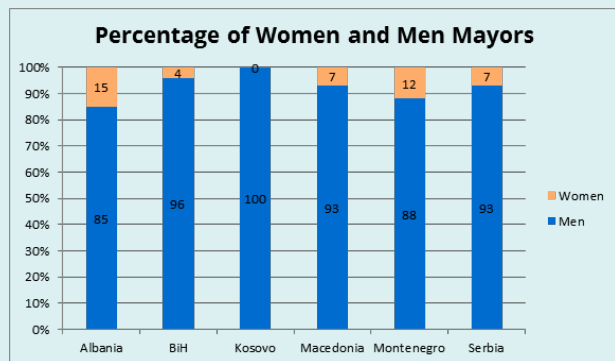
Albania has the highest number of women mayors in the Western Balkans, at 15% country-wide



There are no women Mayors in Kosovo

7.5%

The average regional percentage of women mayors is very low; 7.5% (Albania 15%, Montenegro 12%, Macedonia 7%, Serbia 7%, BiH 4%, Kosovo 0%)



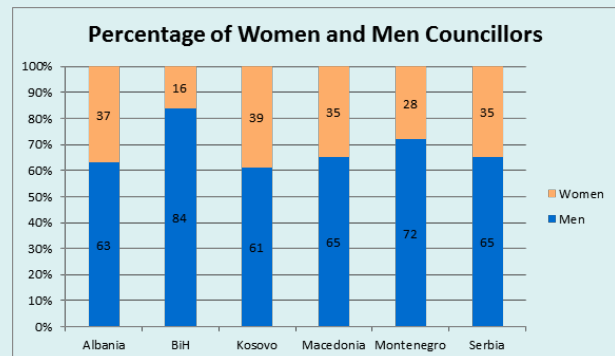
WOMEN COUNSELLORS

39%

Kosovo has the highest number of women councillors in the region, at 39%

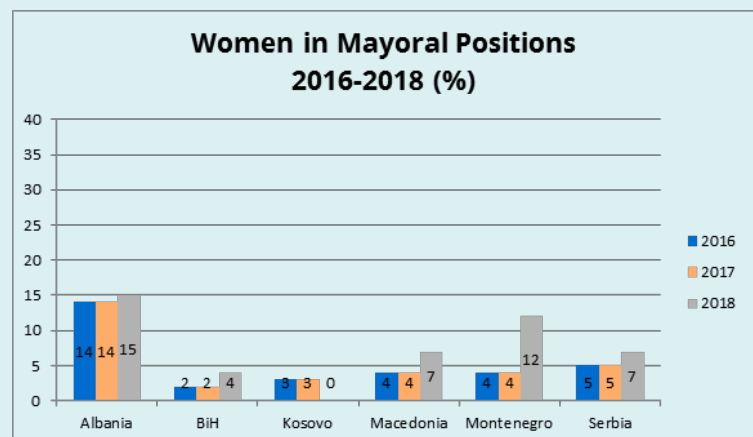
31.6%

The average percentage of women councillors in the region is 31.6% (Kosovo 39%, Albania 37%, Macedonia 35%, Serbia 35%, Montenegro 28%, BiH 16%)



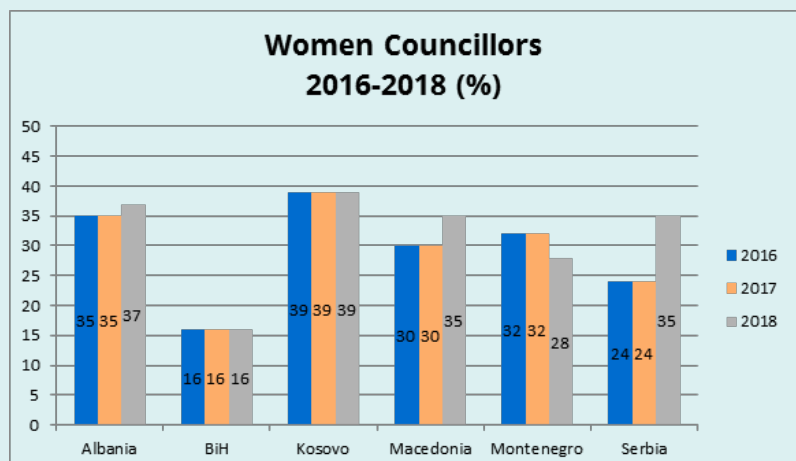
Comparison chart:
Women in Mayoral Positions 2016-2018

	2016	2017	2018
Albania	14	14	15
BiH	2	2	4
Kosovo	3	3	0
Macedonia	4	4	7
Montenegro	4	4	12
Serbia	5	5	7



Comparison chart:
Women Councillors 2016-2018

	2016	2017	2018
Albania	35	35	37
BiH	16	16	16
Kosovo	39	39	39
Macedonia	30	30	35
Montenegro	32	32	28
Serbia	24	24	35



QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF GENDER BALANCE PROMOTION IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS

Women in politics and decision-making positions in the Western Balkans are still underrepresented and the fight to change this needs to continue through the support, empowerment and encouraging women's engagement and participation at the decision-making level. This means an active engagement in targeting the barriers and challenges that women face in accessing positions with decision-making power and making systemic changes.

In comparison with previous years, promotion and representation of women in politics continues to face similar challenges as in the past, such as the lack of implementation of existing quota systems, the lack of support for women from the political parties, low public awareness and interest in the importance of gender equality and the political empowerment of women, and the need to deconstruct and unpack oppressive stereotypes and traditions. Women are often discouraged from becoming involved in politics by discriminatory attitudes and practices, including stereotypes further perpetuated by the media.

To understand the quality of political participation and representation of women, it is important to assess the opportunities and challenges that exist in politics as well as in policies of the governments and political parties themselves. Numbers matter, but there is an increasing need for accountability,

transparency and the effective inclusion of women in political processes in the Western Balkans.

Political parties in the region are for the most part supporting their women members only in formalities associated with party statutes and public relations campaigns. Women party members remain discriminated within their own parties. They are not promoted to leadership positions to the same extent as men, and often are not part of policy-making structures within the party hierarchy. There is a need for political parties to remove barriers for the participation of women and to develop initiatives for their full participation and promotion in all policy-making structures and electoral processes.



“Education, education, education! We must be better at it. We must reach out to political parties and to the general electorate with positive examples that promote women’s participation. There is so much that can be done but political will is lacking and this is very difficult to change and takes time.” - Biljana Manaskova, Member of an Electoral Board⁵⁸

⁵⁸ ‘Women’s Political Participation and Violence in Macedonia, Perspectives from Election Management Bodies’, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 8 December 2017, <https://www.ifes.org/news/womens-political-participation-and-violence-macedonia-perspectives-election-management-bodies>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

ALBANIA

"I, myself, think that women must believe in themselves and must eliminate the pervasive perception that men should be leaders. Women are equal and have the same potential as men, but they struggle for their rights. A kind of culture of fear prevents women from competing in elections."

– Blerta Balilaj, the Executive Director of the Women's Democracy Network (WDN) Albania chapter.⁵⁹

In the elections following the enactment of electoral gender quotas in 2009, Albania experienced an immediate and significant increase of women nominated within parties, growing from 9% to 32% between elections. The numbers of women nominated and elected have risen every year, reaching 40% of women nominated and 28% elected to Parliament in 2017.⁶⁰

Women were active but underrepresented in the election campaign of 2017. Several campaigns specifically targeted women voters in an effort to increase participation of the female electoral base. None of the chairpersons of the 18 parties that contested in the elections were women. Women were also underrepresented in the election administration, including in decision-making positions.⁶¹

Equal gender representation and participation are generally only on the radar during elections. There is a lack of political will by leaders, who use technical barriers to block women's participation in high-level political decision-making, reducing their chances to compete for leadership positions in political parties. Women candidates often have to face gender-based prejudice, which often limits women's freedom of professional opportunity and fair competition in an internal party race. Equal chances for high-level careers for women are also limited by beliefs of party members that tough political challenges and competition faced in local and central elections can only be handled by men. No Albanian political party has ever held any special meetings of its parliamentary group or of its steering structures to specifically address gender representation amongst its ranks. None of the parties has an in-depth program that properly structures goals, strategies, and concrete

commitments to this end. Women's forums in political parties continue to be considered add-on structures to the parties. They do not have their own resources or office space and function as satellites of the party structures, along with parties' youth organisations.⁶²

Media plays a fundamental role in the promotion of equal political representation. It does so by publicly promoting positive models of women in politics, and of course by giving politicians the opportunities to present themselves and their stances. Findings from public and private television channel monitoring by the OSCE Election Observation Mission for ODIHR indicated that the media only dedicated 13% of their total campaign coverage to women.⁶³

"For more than eight years now, we have supported many activities strengthening the position of women in politics all across Albania through the National Platform for Women. We have also organised trainings for women local councillors [...] and this year we are developing it into a more systematic and comprehensive training program under the concept of Academy of Women Councillors, empowering women at grassroots level." – Ambassador Bernd Borchardt, Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania⁶⁴

The Albanian example provides some insights as to ways that gender-targeted public funding may work to promote gender equality in decision-making positions. The share of total party income received from public sources is high. In Albania, political parties rely on public funding for upwards of 90% of their total funding. This constitutes a strong incentive to nominate women, which is not the case in other countries in the region. There was a strong connection between the gender balance achieved and the level of public funding provided. In Albania, parties risked significant financial loss for failing to follow the legislation. After the 2017 elections, the country's second largest party (the Democratic Party) lost 57% of funding ahead of the elections due to its failure to adhere to the regulations in some districts.⁶⁵

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Some of the main challenges for women's participation in politics are education, professional and social status and support in election campaigns. According to Amna Popovac, an activist and a political party member in BiH: "The decision of women to actively participate in political life is mostly influenced by their environment, which is mainly traditional and prejudiced against women. Prejudices have the greatest impact on self-esteem of women and their desire to participate in political life. Support from family and friends is one of the most important reasons as to why women decide to become actively involved in political life."⁶⁶

"Many progressive politicians are pushed out from the political scene despite their immense contribution to the democratization of BiH society, and women politicians do not get a chance to make any contributions due to the fact that they are excluded from important political processes. This illustrates the fact that women are rarely candidates for Mayors, even more rare is their election into the position, and leading positions on candidate lists are usually reserved for men... Such exclusivity of political parties sends the message to women that they are not welcome." Edita Miftari, a gender studies researcher in BiH⁶⁷

Most political parties have not gone beyond the formalities associated with statutes and public relation campaigns; regardless of political orientation, women are discriminated against even within their own parties. They are not promoted to leadership positions or awarded high-profile positions, and their candidacies are not pushed towards the forefront during an election. Indeed, they are not necessarily part of policymaking circles within the party hierarchy and there is little strategic thinking on women's rights or discrimination. Gender-sensitivity is also not necessarily part of the consciousness of women politicians: they rarely refer to gender equity or its value in a democratic society.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ M. Martinez, 'Born to Lead: Blerta from Albania', *Democracy Speaks*, 14 March 2018, <https://www.democracyspeaks.org/blog/born-lead-blerta-albania>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

⁶⁰ 'Funding for Women Candidates', *iKNOWPOLITICS*, <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss/e-discussions/funding-women-candidates>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁶¹ OSCE and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Republic of Albania: Parliamentary Elections 25 June 2017 (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report)*, Warsaw, Poland, 2017, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/346661?download=true>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁶² A. Krasniqi, *Standards of Representation in Political Parties*, UN Women, Tirana, Albania, 2017, <http://isp.com.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/STANDARDS-OF-REPRESENTATION-IN-POLITICAL-PARTIES.pdf>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ OSCE, *Head of Presence's Remarks for Women in Politics Conference*, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/presence-in-albania/385797?download=true>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁶⁵ 'Funding for Women Candidates', *iKNOWPOLITICS*, <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss/e-discussions/funding-women-candidates>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁶⁶ A. Jelonjić, 'Žene u Politici: (P)ostale smo Kvota', *Diskriminacija*, 14 May 2018, <http://www.diskriminacija.ba teme/%C5%BEene-u-politici-postale-smo-kvota>, (accessed 9 October 2018), quote translated by the authors.

⁶⁷ D. Čarkadžić, 'Mizeran Broj Žena kao Nositeljica Lista na Izborima 2018. Godine', *Istinomjer*, 14 August 2018, <http://istinomjer.ba/mizeran-broj-zena-kao-nositeljica-lista-na-izborima-2018-godine/>, (accessed 2 October 2018), quote translated by the authors.

⁶⁸ E. Grbavac, 'Prava Žena i Njihova Podzastupljenost na Svim Nivoima Vlasti u BiH', *Inicijativa za Monitoring Evropskih Integracija BiH*, <http://eu-monitoring.ba/prava-zena-i-njihova-podzastupljenost-na-svim-nivoima-vlasti-u-bih/>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

KOSOVO

The influence of patriarchal social and cultural tradition stifles progress towards gender equality in Kosovo. Women who decide to enter into politics face gendered barriers that men are far less likely to encounter, such as the need to overcome family/domestic social and time pressures and the daily challenge of proving to the electoral base that they deserve to be there based on their skills and capacities, not simply because they are fulfilling a quota.⁶⁹

The conclusions and remarks from UN Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security in Kosovo provides a glimpse into the current situation for women in politics and decision-making in the country, which appear in an assessment from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems:

Luljeta Demolli, Executive Director of the Kosovar Gender Studies Centre, pointed out that the patriarchal mentality persists in Kosovo and that the signal being sent to women and girls is to stay away from decision-making. This, she said, discourages young girls from pursuing a career in politics. Demolli underlined the need for media and political parties to play a greater role in influencing change.

Jeta Krasniqi, Project Manager at the Kosovo Democratic Institute, described how the problem lies with the lack of political will to empower women's participation in all political party structures. According to her, political party leaders do not perceive women as assets but rather as simply "quotas" and without the political will to change this mentality, she argues, the reality will not change.

Jovana Radosavljević, Executive Director of the New Social Initiative, stated that women who enter politics are stereotyped and scrutinised regardless of the community they are part of. She commented that the general belief is that women are "too soft" to handle politics and that their place should be "in the kitchen or the laundry room". According to her, another obstacle for women is the fact that they tend not to trust and support other women. Referring to the Kosovar-Serb community, she said that women political candidates often lack the infrastructure to carry out effective political campaigns.

Panelists from the UN Global Open Day agreed that the main structural barriers to women's political participation are: 1) the existence of deep-rooted patriarchal values and gender stereotypes about women's role and position in society; 2) a lack of political will within political parties to promote women candidates, especially to leadership roles; 3) women's lack of access to resources and media during their campaigns; and 4) the presence of gender discrimination and stereotyping within the media.⁷⁰

MACEDONIA

Silvana Boneva, Member of the State Election Commission (SEC): "The efforts of women in Macedonia toward equal responsibility and participation in public life became visible in 2003, when the Club of Women Members of Parliament was established. I have the honour to have been one of the founders as well as deputy coordinator of the Club. One of the most significant successes was the introduction in 2006 of a mandatory quota of no less than 30 percent for the less-represented gender on the lists of candidates for Members of Parliament and municipal councils."⁷¹

In 2015, amendments to the Electoral Code increased the minimum threshold for representation of the less-represented gender from 30 to 40 percent.⁷²

Bledar Ziba, Member of a Municipal Election Commission stated: "Despite the requirements in the electoral legislation, I believe that women's political involvement in Macedonia has been modest and unsatisfying so far and it is still at a low level. In recent years, more efforts have been made to promote the involvement of women in politics and increase their representation in the elected bodies at central and local levels."⁷³

There is a need to address the underlying causes and systemic barriers regarding the public/private divide, which continue to work against the efforts that are made to increase women's participation. So far, the promotion of women's participation in public life did not prominently feature in campaigns. During rallies, female candidates were often on the main stage, but had little speaking time. Women candidates who met with the OSCE and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission at the end of 2017, however, did not express concern on the lack of equal opportunity to campaign. On average 23% of attendees at rallies observed were women and a lower women's participation rate was noted at rallies in ethnic Albanian areas. Within campaign management teams, women did not hold prominent leadership positions. It is recommended that political parties and relevant institutions take country-wide initiatives to encourage the participation of women in the electoral process and in political decision-making.⁷⁴ These initiatives ought to be especially extended to ethnic minority communities to specifically ensure their increased participation.

⁶⁹ 'Final Report: 2018 UN Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security; Focus on Women's Political Participation in Kosovo', *United Nations Peacekeeping*, 2018, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/final-report-2018-un-global-open-day-women-peace-and-security-focus-womens-political-participation>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁷⁰ UN Women, *Summary Report: UN Global Open Day 2018 Women Peace and Security, Focus on Women's Political Participation in Kosovo*, Pristina, Kosovo, 2018, https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/global_open_day_2018_final_report_eng_0.pdf, (accessed 9 October 2018).

⁷¹ 'Women's Political Participation and Violence in Macedonia, Perspectives from Election Management Bodies', *International Foundation for Electoral Systems*, 8 December 2017, <https://www.ifes.org/news/womens-political-participation-and-violence-macedonia-perspectives-election-management-bodies>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ OSCE and ODIHR, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Municipal Elections 15 October and 29 October 2017 (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report)*, Warsaw, Poland, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/367246?download=true>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

MONTENEGRO

Considering that women remain underrepresented in the political sphere in Montenegro, international organisations and national CSOs continue to empower women MPs' political parties, through advancing their knowledge and skills in the areas of gender equality and women's political activism. Rather than the government, international institutions and CSOs are addressing these issues and are empowering women in both accessing and entering politics. Through different programs, women can access trainings that enhance political engagement of women in the context of future parliamentary elections and beyond.⁷⁵ To increase sustainability however, the focus and ownership would need to be stronger with the national institutions.

There were no women among the political party leaders and very few in the parties' leadership. Electoral lists satisfy only the minimum requirements in terms of gender equality. The main legal framework regulating political parties is contained in the Law on Political Parties and the Law on the Funding of Political Subjects and Electoral Campaigns, amended in December 2017, with the aim to implement some of the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. Shortcomings in both the existing legal framework and those identified by OSCE/ODIHR are yet to be addressed by the state. These include failing to ensure further strengthening of women's participation in politics.⁷⁶

Involvement of women's visibility in politics remained low even in the electoral administration, during this reporting period as well as during previous ones.

SERBIA

The efforts to improve political representation are commonly focused on system-related barriers and constraints determining proposed women candidates to political functions. Barriers that keep women from accessing positions where they can obtain political skills and seniority still exist. Many political parties start at the local level, which serves as a springboard for entry into major channels of political promotion. Participation at the level of local authorities, for women makes an indispensable precondition to progress towards higher political offices. The method of local-level candidate selection directly affects women's empowerment and further political careers.⁷⁷

The process of selection, nomination and campaigning for political office are important steps in promotion of women's political participation. Voters need to be convinced to elect women candidates and parties simultaneously need to be convinced to run more women in top positions of electoral lists.⁷⁸

Political parties have a great responsibility for an increase in women's political participation. Even so, the consideration of a gender perspectives or gender sensitivity is an uncommon practice for Serbian political parties when drafting public policy. Political parties engage declaratively and assume rather conservative stances when addressing the issue of gender equality, commonly reducing women to their reproductive role. The issue of gender equality has been imposed and acquired within some institutional mechanisms, such as the work being done to increase women's participation, but not in the level of reaching solutions for gender-specific problems or advocacy on behalf of women's interests that appear in day-to-day activities.⁷⁹

Campaign case study

BiH election campaign initiatives in support of women candidates⁸⁰

The question of how many women are represented in the government institutions is at the focus of the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH's campaign 'We represent – you vote' (*Mi predstavljamo – vi birate*). Although gender equality is a value guaranteed by the BiH constitution, women of the BiH society are still facing inequality and discrimination. The imbalanced representation and participation of women in the elections in BiH is one of the examples of the inequality. Therefore, the Agency for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, started a campaign to ensure better visibility of women at the 2018 elections. The campaign was supported financially by the Council of Europe. Ambassador Drahošlav Štefanek from the Head of Council of Europe Office in Sarajevo participated in a press conference in September 2018 in support of this campaign. Štefanek expressed the hope that "the representation and participation of women in political life will be closer to 40%, which is the norm that BiH must strive for."

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić, Director of the Agency for Gender Equality, has stated that all political parties had been invited to propose female candidates that will be the part of the campaign. She also stated that she was satisfied with the responses and generally very optimistic with the determination that the female candidates showed during the campaign.⁸¹

In the words of Gordana Vidović, President of the Peasant Party, a veteran of the struggle for gender equality in politics, and a candidate for the Republika Srpska National Assembly: "As well as on billboards and on the electoral lists women are in the background, behind the leader, or as a 'decoration' among favoured male candidates. While men hold political speeches, the women in the campaign visit monasteries and share Pampers diapers. The novelty of this campaign is that many female candidates, especially young women, recognised that they will not have many uses from campaign of the party, and turned to social networking as an inexpensive but powerful tool for promotion"⁸²

⁷⁵ United Nations Development Programme, 'Support to the Anti-Discrimination and Gender Equality Policies', *UNDP Montenegro*, <http://www.me.undp.org/content/montenegro/en/home/operations/projects/socialinclusion/Gender1.html>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

⁷⁶ European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document, Montenegro 2018 Report*, Strasbourg, France, 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighborhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-montenegro-report.pdf>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

⁷⁷ L. Čičkarić, *In/Visibility of Women in Serbian Politics*, 2017, <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/6c78cece-f933-4204-b2c4-7a71fc080ad7.pdf>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Bosnia and Herzegovina: General elections announced for October 7th, 2018 (Election for President, Election for House of Representatives, Election for House of Peoples)

⁸¹ Šef Ureda Vijeća Evrope u Sarajevu Učestvovao na Pres Konferenciji Organizovanoj od Strane Agencije za Ravnopravnost Spolova Bosne I Hercegovine, te Podržao Njihovu Kampanju o Povećanju Učešća Žena na Izborima', *Council of Europe Portal*, https://www.coe.int/bs/web/sarajevo/vijesti/-/asset_publisher/DuKPIRcfHuhP/content/head-of-council-of-europe-office-in-sarajevo-participated-in-the-press-conference-organized-by-agency-for-gender-equality-of-bosnia-and-herzegovina-an?inheritRedirect=false, (accessed 9 October 2018).

⁸² Nakon Borbe za Veće Učešće Žena u Politici u BiH Stereotipi Uporno Opstaju', *Regional.ba*, 24 September 2018, <https://regional.ba/nakon-borbe-za-vece-ucesce-zena-u-politici-u-bih-stereotipi-uporno-opstaju/>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

Recommendations

Requirements that remain crucial in promoting women's effective political participation include:

- Fighting deep-rooted patriarchal norms and ensuring that the political climate is free of negative gender-based stereotyping and violence;
- Ensuring substantial support from political parties and especially party leadership to promote women and men candidates equally to all leadership positions in political party executive bodies, considering internal quotas to increase women's power in political party structures.
- Increasing support for women who have been elected, amplifying their voices in decision-making processes.⁸³
- Considering special temporary measures to promote the entry and retention of women in Parliament.
- Endorsing training and mentoring schemes that pair elected parliamentarians with eligible women interested in running for election, including courses on various aspects of election campaigns and training in media relations.
- Establishing support networks for women candidates at elections and for elected women with the goal of improving both recruitment and retention rates.⁸⁴
- Political parties could introduce voluntarily measures to earmark a certain percentage of their overall budget to a women's wing. The women's wing could then use this money in election years to offer different kinds of support to women candidates.⁸⁵
- Political parties should strengthen their women's wings and institutionalise joint sessions of parliamentary groups, municipal councils and the group of ministers with women's forums.
- Parties should include a gender perspective in their electoral programs.
- Civil society should be supported by international organisations and institutions to monitor internal party processes in order to increase the quantity and quality of representation of women at all levels of political parties, and the selection process of candidates and MPs should be focused on candidate withdrawal or their replacement into the multi-name list.
- Media should strive towards more equal promotion of women's and men's electoral campaigns.
- Special funds for internal party campaigns and electoral campaigns should be allocated to women's forums and women candidates, so as to establish positive gender budgeting practices in parties, the Parliament, and the government.
- Women's forums in political parties should ensure public transparency to present their activities and structures, as well as initiate debates on concrete issues regarding gender equality in society and politics.⁸⁶
- One of the mandatory questions by media to political candidates should be on their take on the struggle for gender equality and equal participation of women and men in politics.⁸⁷

Albania

- An example of a sustainable good practices have been the Women's Alliance of Members of Parliament and the Alliances of Women Councillors. Such groups should be encouraged to be more active, create debate forums and raise awareness on gender issues, including issues of political representation at all levels of government.⁸⁸

Bosnia and Herzegovina

One of the key issues emphasised in the 2018 final report of the joint initiative Include Women in Change Processes between the European Union (EU) Special Representative to BiH, Sida and the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation was that women's voices and needs continue to be ignored, and in relation to that, the following recommendations were emphasised:

- Ensure greater and more meaningful participation of women in politics, with power at all levels of government,
- Regularly and meaningfully consult women in policy-making, including through better consultation with women's rights organisations and the application of meaningful public consultations when determining priorities and developing legislation,
- Support networking and joint advocacy efforts of women's rights CSOs in BiH to promote women's needs in policy-making,
- Support gender mainstreaming in policy-making, including by undertaking gender impact assessments that look at the potential impact of planned policies on women and men, or by application of gender-responsive budgeting,
- Sensitise citizens and key function-holders to the importance of gender equality, for example through public campaigns and community level discussions.⁸⁹

Radmila Žigić, journalist, politicologist and activist: "There is a process of marginalization of women within the party and fight for control of the electoral process and the preservation of power led by party leaders. Women are becoming massive 'labour force' in the elections, they bring votes, but not winning positions because the electoral process is corrupted. Personal votes are added and who will be chosen to decide by men's centres of power within the parties. In such situations it can pass only women participating in the 'rules' of the game."⁹⁰

⁸³ UN Women, Summary Report: *UN Global Open Day 2018 Women Peace and Security, Focus on Women's Political Participation in Kosovo*, Pristina, Kosovo, 2018, https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/global_open_day_2018_final_report_eng_0.pdf, (accessed 9 October 2018).

⁸⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, 2017.

⁸⁵ 'Funding for Women Candidates', *IKNOWPOLITICS*, <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss/e-discussions/funding-women-candidates>, (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁸⁶ A. Krasniqi, *Standards of Representation in Political Parties*, UN Women, Tirana, Albania, 2017, <http://isp.com.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/STANDARDS-OF-REPRESENTATION-IN-POLITICAL-PARTIES.pdf>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁸⁷ 'Medijama Povodom Opštih Izborna 2018', *Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar*, 7 September 2018, <http://soc.ba/medijama-povodom-opstih-izbora-2018/>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

⁸⁸ A. Krasniqi, *Standards of Representation in Political Parties*, UN Women, Tirana, Albania, 2017, <http://isp.com.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/STANDARDS-OF-REPRESENTATION-IN-POLITICAL-PARTIES.pdf>, (accessed 4 October 2018).

⁸⁹ S. Tieleman et al., *Uključimo Žene u Promjene / Include Women in Change Processes Initiative*, the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, UrbanGRAF, 2018, <http://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Kvinna-Till-Kvinna-FINAL-REPORT-ENG-003.pdf>, (accessed 30 October 2018) and 'Bosnia and Herzegovina: Involving Women in Change Processes', *Civil Society Strengthening Platform*, 13 September 2018, <https://cssplatform.org/bosnia-herzegovina-involving-women-change-processes-bosna-hercegovina-ukljucimo-zene-u-promjene>, (accessed 9 October).

⁹⁰ 'Nakon Borbe za Veće Učešće Žena u Politici u BiH Stereotipi Uporno Opstaju', *Regional.ba*, 24 September 2018, <https://regional.ba/nakon-borbe-za-vece-ucesce-zena-u-politici-u-bih-stereotipi-uporno-opstaju/>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Although all Western Balkan countries adopted relevant laws on domestic violence (DV) protection within criminal, misdemeanour and/or family legislations, there is still a need to harmonise these laws so as to ensure effective government response to violence against women (VAW). In comparison with the previous editions of the Women's Rights in the Western Balkans research reports, there are still many obstacles in developing efficient and effective policy and legal responses in the region.

Brief examples of challenges regarding data collection procedures include the lack of systematised monitoring by institutions of relevant statistics of VAW; the qualification of

DV as a misdemeanour offense, rather than as a criminal offense; and the low numbers in reported cases that are in part due to difficulties in processing of cases of VAW.

One of the largest problems that survivors face is the inadequate, long and complicated procedures between the incident and their ability to access support, protection and rehabilitation from state institutions. The lack of information about available support/services, mistrust in institutions, patriarchal attitudes towards the family sphere, and low reporting rates of GBV can all contribute to added difficulties for survivors in accessing the care that they need from properly professionals.

NUMBER OF TRAINED RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES (LAWYERS, POLICEMEN, SOCIAL WORKERS, HEALTH CENTRE REPRESENTATIVES, PROSECUTORS) FOR PROTECTION, SUPPORT AND REHABILITATION OF SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

In recognition of the many challenges in prevention as well as response to VAW, a number of trainings for relevant officials and professionals are organised across the Western Balkan region. Trainings for responsible authorities are integrated and facilitated by relevant institutions (for example police, social welfare institutions and Ministries) and also provided by projects and programmes of different international organisations. It is important to note that collecting data on the conducted trainings for professionals (number, content, evaluation reports) continues to pose a challenge, and for the writing of this third edition of the Women's Rights in the Western Balkans report, it has not been possible to obtain definite or quantifiable statistics.

Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence⁹¹

The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) is an independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). Among the countries involved in GREVIO's monitoring work, Albania,⁹² Serbia⁹³ and Montenegro⁹⁴ have submitted their country reports for the latest monitoring cycle. The reports of BiH and Macedonia are expected to be submitted during 2019.

⁹¹ 'About GREVIO - Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence', Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

⁹² 'Albania (Country Monitoring)', Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/albania>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

⁹³ 'Serbia (Country Monitoring)', Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/serbia>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

⁹⁴ 'Montenegro (Country Monitoring)', Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/montenegro>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

ALBANIA

GBV is a country-wide problem, and reasons for this include the predominant culture of toxic masculinities, low educational levels in some areas of the country and low levels of information pertaining to social issues, the difficult economic situation in low-income communities and other gender-based inequalities. Poor functioning of the judicial system and inadequate police training are other contributory factors.

Whilst recognising that the government has made efforts to increase the capacities of the police, and that the role of the police in the fight against violence has improved over the time span of the previous year, the UN stated that there is significant variation in the professionalism of the police, and that they have supported the Police Academy to update their curriculum.

The Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) noted that, with regard to discrimination: “Usually, due to the position the CPD has in relation to DV cases, and that the victims go to other institutions, the monitoring of these cases is very difficult for the CPD. But due to the sensitivities the issue has, especially since 2015, we have arranged training with the police about discrimination issues. We have also arranged training with schools, other education facilities – anyone who has a direct contact with this issue. As per Albanian law, the victim may go straight to court, social services, Prosecutors Office – but in 99% cases they come to the police, because this shows the faith in the system and the institutions.”⁹⁵

According to Josif Shtëmbari, the Director for Crimes at the General Directory for Police in Tirana, there were recent trainings at Korçë, which included police from neighbouring regions of southern Albania. He added that previous years had involved international organisations in training, such as the OSCE, the EU, and a Swedish project with involvement of the authorities, where 240 officers attended the trainings which led to the creation of a manual on how to treat survivors of DV. Shtëmbari added that police had undergone trainings at a national level for working with survivors of DV. The main focus of these trainings was to build on the gender-sensitivity required to understand the survivors’ situation. Staff with social service backgrounds showed more familiarity with these topics. The trainings are also focused on capturing many people within the police force because police move around, and new officers need training as well. Shtëmbari also mentioned the frequent turnover of police staff who have been trained in GBV as a challenge.

The Directory for Domestic Violence, in cooperation with the Police Academy, arranges regular three-day training for 20 officers at a time. The training of the police force was an important factor in the improvement for the proceedings of DV reporting. The Ministry of Education is also involved in police training and is part of the “Police in the Community” training. The Ministry for Health and Social Protection indicated that the police force had undergone trainings at both regional and local levels.

Caritas, a faith-based CSO, has provided training on the protection of survivors of trafficking for police officers as well. A training module has been developed with the collaboration of the National Coordinator against Trafficking and is used as school curricula in the Police Academy.⁹⁶

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The OSCE Mission in BiH maintains a database on DV referrals and cases in the Federation of BiH. It also supports courses that train representatives from the police, safe houses, and social work centres on how to use the database.⁹⁷

Rape, including spousal rape, is a criminal offense in BiH. The failure of police to treat spousal rape as a serious offense inhibited the effective enforcement of the law. Women victims/survivors of rape did not have regular access to free social support or assistance, and continued to face prejudice and discrimination in their communities and at times from representatives of public institutions. While laws in both entities empower authorities to remove the perpetrator from the home, officials rarely, if ever, made use of these provisions. Law enforcement officials were frequently under the mistaken impression that they needed to concern themselves with where the perpetrator would live following the removal. This indicates that many of the officers are not trained in the legal proceedings that follow a report of GBV. As a result of such mistakes, women in danger were compelled to go to safe houses while perpetrators remained in the home. CSOs reported that authorities often returned offenders to their family homes less than 24 hours after a violent event or removal. In the Federation, authorities prosecuted DV as a felony, while in Republika Srpska, it can be reported as either a felony or misdemeanour. Even when DV resulted in prosecution and conviction, offenders were regularly fined or given suspended sentences, even for repeat offenders.

Although police received specialised training in sensitivity for handling DV cases, CSOs reported widespread reluctance among officers in both entities to break up families by arresting offenders.⁹⁸

The country undertook several initiatives to combat rape and DV which indicates an improvement from previous years and previous editions of Women’s Rights in the Western Balkans. In June 2018, a Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees report on the prevention and reduction of DV noted that more than 2 200 professionals working in administration, police agencies, health care and social service institutions had received training on GBV. Although police received specialised training in handling cases of DV, CSOs reported widespread reluctance among officers in both entities to break up families by arresting offenders.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Home Office Fact-Finding Mission [HOFFM], Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission, Albania, 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681071/Home_Office_FFM_Report_-_Albania.pdf, (accessed 11 October 2018).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ J. Larsen (ed.), Combating Violence Against Women in the OSCE Region, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Vienna, Austria, 2017, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/286336?download=true>, (accessed 11 October 2018).

⁹⁸ United States Department of State, ‘Bosnia & Herzegovina’, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277391.pdf>, (accessed 24 September 2018).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

KOSOVO

Despite the legal and policy framework for gender equality, GBV continues to be widespread in Kosovar society. There still has been no justice for conflict-related sexual violence. DV and other forms of GBV continue to be prevalent. A study conducted by the Kosovo Women's Network identified various issues with the legislation on DV as a result of interviewing civil court judges: problems around what counts as evidence, rare perpetrator imprisonment, delayed issuance of protection orders, inadequate follow-up of protection orders and mild sentencing in cases of violating protection orders. Other literature on the topic indicate numerous failures in the institutions' response to such cases, including a lack of capacity to properly handle DV cases, shortage of financial and human resources, unstable situations of the existing shelters, failure to properly coordinate responses amongst different agencies, and a general lack of sensitivity by the institutions and society as a whole towards GBV. A strong commitment from the government institutions for the implementation of the Strategy for the Protection against Domestic Violence 2016-2020 is crucial.¹⁰⁰

Kosovo's judicial system adopted new standard operating procedures and improved priority assignment of prosecutors for DV cases during the year. The law permits individuals who feel threatened to petition for a restraining order, though the literature indicates that restraining order violations seldom led to criminal charges. Courts rarely gave recidivist-enhanced sentences to repeat offenders, as required by law.

Regarding state-level improvements, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare included a unit dedicated to family violence, and the government created an independent committee to verify and recognise the status of survivors of wartime sexual violence.¹⁰¹

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has organised training sessions for service providers from municipalities throughout Kosovo on the Standard Operating Procedures for Protection from Domestic Violence.¹⁰²

MACEDONIA

Victims/survivors of DV and GBV still have the impression when they report the acts of violence, that adequate actions are not being undertaken to protect them, that police staff do not offer them the information available on possibilities of protection and are acting in a passive manner. There is a lack of coordination between the institutions in charge of dealing with DV, and the inadequate training and experiences of the police staff in dealing with domestic violence cases result in a less than serious approach and attitude towards the victims/survivors, especially so when perpetrators are also police officials.¹⁰³

MONTENEGRO

As with other system actors, it was reported that criminal court judges in Montenegro at times displayed harmful attitudes and insensitivity toward survivors in the courtroom setting. Courts did not communicate with DV victims/survivors about the status of their cases and victims/survivors were left to rely on public sources of information. Although expedited summary proceedings are available in specific cases, most DV cases are protracted and last several months, often leading to further harm or dismissal of cases. Trainings appear to be limited to police desk officers who specialise in DV, meaning that patrol officers who respond to the report lack adequate training. Some officers continue to insist that they do not need training. This is contradicted by recently conducted focus groups, which indicated that police often do not consider VAW to be a human rights violation and that there is a lack knowledge of the measures for protection.

Centre for Social Work staff throughout Montenegro has participated in various trainings held or supported by international organisations, local CSOs, and social work agencies. Many CSOs, however, expressed concern that trainings do not address critical issues integral to survivor safety. As such, staff in social work centres were often placed in the role of mediators. The basic training program for mediators does not address DV. According to the Centre for Mediation, DV is only addressed in advanced training, which only 20 - 30% of mediators in Montenegro have completed. CSOs are not involved in these advanced trainings, but according to the Centre for Mediation, experts in the field lead these DV components.¹⁰⁴

CSOs similarly perceived that misdemeanour judges have not received any relevant training. Misdemeanour judges need training to provide guidance about good practice standards and effective court monitoring of offender participation in therapy programs. Some judges view psycho-social treatment as an appropriate alternative to protective measures, citing responsibility on "mental disorders". Research, however, does not support the theory that different mental abilities are inherently linked to DV and researchers have found that perpetrators' behaviour is inconsistent with profiles of different cognitive abilities.¹⁰⁵

Also, among judges, the judicial perceptions about the weight of DV are inconsistent; some judges explained that information on the topic would assist them in their decision-making, while other judges said that the will of the parties is more significant and weighs heavier on the ruling.

There are no specialised DV prosecutors in the country, and all prosecutors handle these cases as they come. In an interview, one CSO worker opined that prosecutors in particular do not receive adequate training on DV. According to this interviewee; prosecutors should be more educated on GBV and on international standards in this field. Others raised concern that prosecutors are usually traditionalists who encourage reconciliation. For example, women are often pressured into mediation rather than entering the judicial system for prosecution.¹⁰⁶

Even after training, judicial and other institutions do not always exhibit an understanding of VAW. Completing the required training does not mean that officials will necessarily learn or apply gender-sensitive approaches. In Montenegro, various stakeholders, including health care workers, observed the need for doctors to learn to recognise, screen, and document DV. Doctors who reported undergoing training did not express familiarity with techniques for DV screening. Also, doctors with relevant training saw patients only on referral or when the patient was able to independently seek them out. The lack of system or database online that provides the information on trained medical staff is a barrier to accessing the required health care.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ United States Department of State, 'Bosnia & Herzegovina', Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277391.pdf>, (accessed 24 September 2018).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² J. Larsen (ed.), Combating Violence Against Women in the OSCE Region, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Vienna, Austria, 2017, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/286336?download=true>, (accessed 11 October 2018).

¹⁰³ Z. Saltirovska and S. Dimitrijoska, 'Legal and Institutional Functionality in the Protection of Women-Victims of Domestic Violence in the Republic of Macedonia - Present Situation and Future Perspectives', *EJSER European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research Articles*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2017, p. 137.

¹⁰⁴ The Advocates for Human Rights, SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Nikšić, and Women's Rights Centre, Implementation of Montenegro's Domestic Violence Legislation: A Human Rights Report, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/ngo-1-report-to-grevio/168073c75d>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ The Advocates for Human Rights, SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Nikšić, and Women's Rights Centre, Implementation of Montenegro's Domestic Violence Legislation: A Human Rights Report, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/ngo-1-report-to-grevio/168073c75d>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

SERBIA

The Forum of Judges of Serbia have conducted research on the attitudes of judges and prosecutors regarding the implementation of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, with the aim to determine how the law has been interpreted by the judiciary, and whether there is consistency and uniformity of its implementation. The survey confirmed that:

- procedures for the protection against DV were being initiated, in most cases, when violence had already occurred;
- judges interpreted important legal terms differently, for example regarding who is considered a family member under the law. Differences in the attitudes also occurred in the interpretation of "verbal discussion" among family members, as well as whether family violence can be qualified as an act of neglect;
- relevant authorities did not collect enough evidence and information necessary to make a decision about the existence of immediate danger from violence, or even to decide who the victim/survivor and the perpetrator were;
- prosecutors' replies confirmed an uneven understanding and interpretation of the legal norms, and their answers also differed with regard to the composition of Groups for Coordination and Cooperation, even though the composition of these groups is prescribed by the law;
- Groups for Coordination and Cooperation are organised in different ways, in that 59% conduct their work in the form of meetings, 24% via telephone communications, 15% via electronic communication, and 1% of the respondents answered that the Groups were not yet established;
- only 77% of the prosecutors that organise the activities of the groups answered that the group meet twice a month;
- 76% of the prosecutors answered that group meetings never include representatives of relevant organisations and/or other professionals.¹⁰⁸

The OSCE Mission in Serbia has provided training on the special needs of women victims/survivors of violence and human trafficking for employees working in information services at public prosecution offices.¹⁰⁹

The UN Population Fund, alongside with Ministry of Health and the Centre for Women's Health Promotion supported two trainings for health care providers on the topic of GBV, in Niš and Belgrade. There were over 50 participants from across the country in attendance. The main goal of this training was to advance the knowledge and capacities of healthcare professionals in preventing gender-based violence and providing support and care to survivors.¹¹⁰

In Serbia, a system of accreditation of professional training has been established in three areas - social protection, health care, and the education system. Training for the judicial system in Serbia is carried out by the Judicial Academy, and in the case that trainings are organised by other actors, the consent for the curriculum is necessary. Training for police officers is conducted by the Academy of Criminalistics and Police Studies and a special organisational unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and other actors only if they receive the approval of the competent ministry. The main problem is the understanding of the scope and effects of training delivery for professionals in all systems, because data are not unified and easily accessible, they are rarely analysed, and there are no publicly available reports on the number of training courses and participants, nor on the outcomes of trainings.

The Secretariat for Health Care has also been engaged in organising a number of training courses for professionals from health care institutions.

The Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence has introduced a mandatory specialised training of police officers, public prosecutors and judges who apply this law, but not of other professions (social, health care, and educational institutions, for example, are excluded). During 2017, approximately 900 police officers and about 400 prosecutors and judges were trained for the implementation of this law, during two- and three-day seminars.

Before the law came into force, the Judicial Academy conducted trainings for 59 judges and 2 242 deputy public prosecutors. At the same time, the Police Academy held three-day trainings for 450 future specialised police officers. In April 2017, the CSO Autonomous Women's Centre sent a letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the request to improve the curriculum of the training and triple the number of trained police officers.

The Ministry of Social Policy did not provide trainings on the new law for the professionals in Centres for Social Work.¹¹¹ This is cause for concern as staff in social work centres are sometimes the first point-of-contact for victims/survivors of GBV, and the Ministry must ensure that these frontline workers are up-to-date on trainings and knowledge.

Case study

Between April-May 2018, representatives of Autonomous Women's Centre, together with deputy prosecutors and police officers, and with the support of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs created and carried out training for police officers in patrols and emergency units in three Police Directorates in the country. Following the experiences of Autonomous Women's Centre clients, and based on conclusions from the consultation meetings with three groups for coordination and cooperation, it turned out that education on implementation of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence was necessary for all police officers who responded to cases of DV (rather than solely for specialised police officers). This was due in part to the lack of knowledge of police officers in patrols and emergency units on how to proceed with the reported violence following their arrival to the scene. Bearing in mind that police officers on the field are considered the 'eyes and ears' of the specialised police officers and deputy prosecutors, it is necessary for the relevant Ministry to supervise their work because the quality of information gathering reduces the possibility of errors in assessing risks by the specialised police officer.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Autonomous Women's Centre [AWC], Improved Legislation Failed Protection, Belgrade, Serbia, 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/improved-legislation-failed-protection-independent-awc-s-report-to-gre/16808e2f8b>, (accessed 10 October 2018).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ United Nations Gender Theme Group in Serbia, Women and Men in Serbia: At a Glance (Gender Brief for Serbia), 2017, http://rs.one.un.org/content/dam/unct/serbia/docs/GB_07_03.pdf, (accessed 12 October 2018).

¹¹¹ AWC, Improved Legislation Failed Protection, Belgrade, Serbia, 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/improved-legislation-failed-protection-independent-awc-s-report-to-gre/16808e2f8b>, (accessed 10 October 2018).

¹¹² Ibid.

Recommendations

While governments have made efforts to address the problem, VAW remains prevalent in the region. Further legal changes are needed, as well as significant investment in human and financial resources in the judicial system, police, and health and social service sectors. Survivors under protection orders need to feel safe and effectively protected in the long-term. The impunity of perpetrators should cease, and violations of protection orders should not be tolerated. Government officials also need to understand that GBV will not decrease without a strong civil society and should use the opportunity to benefit from both the technical support and oversight that CSOs provide.

The implementation of laws and policies is key, but it is also important to find ways to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and change sexist mentalities. Men need to understand that the way they treat their spouses, mothers, daughters or partners is not always a private matter and

their actions may have legal consequences. Women require a strong support system and must be able to trust the authorities so that they can feel confident in reporting and putting an end to violent situations. Girls and boys need to learn from an early age both at school and at home that violence cannot not be tolerated.

Governmental bodies, however, cannot be the only actors working on reaching these goals in the Western Balkans. Civil society has the potential to play a major role in ending VAW. Women's CSOs in the region have traditionally been proactive in this field, particularly in influencing legislative processes and providing services to survivors. At times, their voice and presence is not given the space that it deserves. Women's CSOs should be able to expand their outreach efforts across the country, demanding greater accountability and transparency from local and national authorities.¹¹³

NUMBER OF OPERATING SHELTERS AND SOS HELPLINES

Statistical data on the number of national operating shelters and telephone helplines have not changed significantly in comparison with previous editions of the Women's Rights in the Western Balkans reports.

As of January 2018, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention), had been ratified by the following Western Balkan countries: Albania, BiH, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Kosovo¹¹⁴ is the only Western Balkan country that to-date has neither signed nor ratified the Istanbul Convention due to its political status.¹¹⁵ The Istanbul Convention specifies the number of operating shelters and SOS helplines needed per capita to meet the needs of victims/survivors.

Women's shelters in the region at a glance:

- Shelter accommodation is available in all Western Balkan countries, and there are currently 53 shelters available for women in the region who suffered DV. These provide a combined total of 798 bed spaces to women and their children.
- Data indicates that in total, only 44% of required women's shelters' bed spaces are currently available.¹¹⁶
- No Western Balkan country meets the minimum standards of bed-spaces for women's shelters according to the Istanbul Convention.¹¹⁷

National women's SOS helplines in the region at a glance:

- All the countries of the Western Balkan, except Serbia, have set up 24/7 telephone helplines free of charge with multilingual support.
- The number of countries that meet the Istanbul Convention standards for national women's helplines improved since our last report. In 2016 and 2017, 60% of the national women's SOS helplines (three out of five) met standards for operating a helpline both free of charge and available 24/7. In 2018, 100% of national women's helplines (five of five) operated both free of charge and 24/7.

¹¹³ A. Nini-Pavli, 'Expert's Take: Civil Society has the Potential to Play a Major Role in Ending Violence Against Women', UN Women: Europe and Central Asia, 22 September 2017, <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/09/experts-take-agustela-nini-pavli-form-un-women>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

¹¹⁴ Kosovo is not an official member of the Council of Europe but is still taking steps to integrate the Istanbul Convention into its legislation, such as in proposed amendments to the Criminal Code.

¹¹⁵ S. Futter-Orel, WAVE Country Report 2017, Women Against Violence Europe, Vienna, Austria, 2018, http://files.wave-network.org/researchreports/WAVE_CR_2017.pdf, (accessed 15 October 2018).

¹¹⁶ The Istanbul convention in Article 23 calls for the provision of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in for women and their children (if any) in sufficient numbers and recommends that safe accommodation should be available in every region; the explanatory report (§135) specifies that one bed-space should be available per 10 000 head of population.

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ALBANIA

There are 10 shelters for women victims/survivors of violence in Albania. Shelters are located only in the capital and main cities, and the geographical limitations mean that women in rural areas would need to move to access this form of assistance.

Out of the ten shelters, one is specifically designed for children with different abilities and another for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, intersex (LGBTQI) persons. The newest of the shelters was opened in 2015 in Shkodër as an emergency shelter offering temporary accommodation for women victims/survivors of GBV. Country-wide, the shelters have a capacity of approximately 163 beds.¹¹⁸ Their capacity varies from five to 50 persons. In order to meet the minimum requirement of the Council of Europe Convention (1 bed for 10000 inhabitants) an additional 127 beds should be available. Despite the financial difficulties that these shelters are often faced with, no shelter was closed in the last three years. In order to carry out their activities, the shelters operate through support, predominantly from foreign donors. The accommodation period in these shelters varies: in some shelters, women are allowed to stay less than one week, in other shelters, three to six months; in two national shelters, the accommodation period is seven to 12 months, while in another shelter there is no limit to the stay. Immediate and direct access to women's shelters in emergency situations is offered by two centres only: one in Elbasani and the other in Shkodër.

All women's shelters provide 24/7 access. They also have security precautions and offer non-residential support. All the shelters run by CSOs provide non-residential support including, but not limited to, telephone counselling, advocacy, counselling to women who do not live in the shelter, and outreach.¹¹⁹

MONTENEGRO

- There are three women's shelters in Montenegro, covering most regions of the country, except the south of Montenegro. The existing shelters are located mainly in the central and northern districts. Most of the shelters provide 24/7 access. Most also provide immediate and direct access in emergency situations. In the shelter SOS Nikšić, the length of stay is up to one year. In the other two shelters, the length of stay is up to six months (except for single mothers with children who can stay up to one year). Shelters provide services free of charge and operate according to a gender-sensitive/feminist approach.¹²³

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

- The BiH Gender Equality Agency has a memorandum of understanding with the country's nine shelters run by CSOs, that collectively can accommodate up to 200 victims/survivors at a time.¹²⁰

KOSOVO

- Government-funded safe houses for women and children victims/survivors of DV had been temporarily closed for January and February of 2018 due to a lack of financial support. The OSCE mission in Kosovo reacted, expressing their concern: "We are very concerned that the shelters for the victims of domestic violence Kosovo-wide have been closed down due to lack of funds, especially when, on average, about a hundred domestic violence cases are reported to the Kosovo Police every month", adding that "it is contrary to Kosovo's continued institutional commitment to human rights."¹²¹ At the end of February they were re-opened but with limited support.

MACEDONIA

- The government ran seven limited-capacity shelters, and one CSO operated a shelter that could accommodate 30 women.¹²²

SERBIA

- Serbia has 15 safe houses/shelters, out of which five are in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The shelters contain approximately 217 beds country-wide.

The Rulebook on Licensing of Social Welfare Organisations establishes the standards for licensing all social welfare service providers, including safe houses/shelters. According to data of the Republic Institute for Social Welfare, by the end of 2016, four shelters for victims/survivors of DV were officially licensed - three from the state sector, and one from civil society - while other safe houses still do not have their operating licence.

Safe houses are accessible to women with different abilities and they are available 24/7. When providing support to victims, shelters have achieved a good level of coordination with the competent authorities: police, prosecutor's offices, courts and centres for social welfare.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Vatra, ARSIS and Woman's Forum Elbasani have 5 places each; Other Vision has 15 places; D&E has 15 places for women plus 5 more for children; the National Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence has 36 places; the National Shelter for Victims of Trafficking has 50 places; the Shelter for Abused Women in Tirana has a capacity of 12 beds (for women with their children); the Shelter for LGBTI has a capacity of 8 beds; the New Emergency Shelter in Shkodër has 5. Here is not included the number of beds of the Residential Development Centre, since it is dedicated specifically to the children with disabilities. This centre has a capacity of 43 beds for children with disabilities.

¹¹⁹ Independent Advisory Group on Country Information, Country Policy and Information Note, Albania: Women Fearing Domestic Abuse, London, England, 2017, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/671397/Albania_-_DV_-_CPIN_-_v2.0_-_December_2017_.pdf, (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹²⁰ United States Department of State, 'Bosnia & Herzegovina', Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277391.pdf>, (accessed 24 September 2018).

¹²¹ B. Iberdemaj, 'Kosovo Shelters for Domestic Abuse Victims Close Down', Prishtina Insight, 12 January 2018, <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovo-shelters-domestic-abuse-victims-close/>, (accessed 10 October 2018).

¹²² United States Department of State, 'Macedonia', Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277435.pdf>, (accessed 24 September 2018).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence [GREVIO], Comments Submitted by Serbia on GREVIO's Final Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Baseline Report), 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/grevioinf-2018-9/16808c1a4e>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

SOS Helplines

The number of countries that meet the Istanbul Convention standards for national SOS helplines improved since last year's Women's Rights in the Western Balkans report. In 2016 and 2017, 60% of the national women's SOS helplines in the Western Balkans (three out of five) met the standards outlined in the Convention for operating a helpline both free of charge and available 24/7. In 2018, 100% of national women's helplines (five out of five) operated both free of charge and 24/7.

Some countries in the region have national helplines that have a specific focus. For example, in BiH, there is a helpline that covers the entire territory of the country and is specifically supporting survivors of wartime rape and sexual violence, and for providing support for their family members.¹²⁵

ALBANIA

Since December 2016, a donor-funded national emergency number for survivors of DV has been operational. The GREVIO November 2017 Report stated: "GREVIO congratulates the authorities for their recent move to enter into an agreement with the women's [CSOs], the Counselling Centre for Women and Girls, to launch a single national helpline... covering the entire territory devoted specifically to violence against women, operating free of charge and 24/7. Until November 2016, the national women's helpline in Albania...had not been available 24 hours a day due to limitations in funding. By complementing the services provided by the municipal helplines, the new helpline will allow meeting the requirements of Article 24¹²⁶ of the Istanbul Convention, especially in terms of round-the-clock accessibility."¹²⁷

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

- There are two national women's SOS helplines in BiH, one covering the Federation of BiH and the other covering Republika Srpska.¹²⁸ The helplines are run by women's CSOs and they operate 24/7, free of charge.¹²⁹

KOSOVO

- There are two national women's SOS helplines in Kosovo. The Direct Line for Victims of Violence is funded by the state, operates 24/7 and is free of charge. The second helpline, SOS Linja, is operated by a CSO and funded through foreign donations. It operates 24/7 and calls are free of charge. Both helplines provide support in Albanian and Serbian.¹³⁰

MACEDONIA

- A national CSO operated a helpline in both Macedonian and Albanian and ran two crisis centres to provide temporary shelter for survivors of DV.¹³¹
- There is one national women's helpline in Macedonia, run by the National Council for Gender Equality, the National SOS mobile helpline. It is free of charge, and it offers support in Macedonian and Albanian.¹³²

MONTENEGRO

- The Network of SOS Helplines is an informal network consisting of five local SOS helplines, across five cities (Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, Berane, Plav and Ulcinj). All organisations work directly with women victims/survivors of GBV, including marginalised women from minority and disadvantaged groups. This informal network does not currently meet the needs of women's organisations, due to limited resources.¹³³

SERBIA

- At the level of the state, no national SOS helpline for women survivors of violence has yet been established to meet the standards of the Istanbul Convention in terms of accessibility, anonymity and other criteria. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has a free phone number to report DV. It is possible to report all forms of DV, regardless of gender and/or age of survivors and/or perpetrators.

There have been several attempts to set up a national women's SOS helpline, and the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs made an open call both in 2017 and again in 2018 for submitting project proposals to establish a National SOS helpline for women victims of violence. However, these kinds of social services should be financed through the process of public procurement exclusively and, therefore opening these calls have not been in accordance with the Law. At both occasions, the Women Against Violence Network¹³⁴, coordinated by the Autonomous Women's Centre brought public attention to this issue. In 2017 they succeeded in having the call withdrawn. At the point of writing this report, the call made in 2018 remains open.¹³⁵ In the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, there is a unique SOS helpline for the province since 2012, operated by an alliance of associations in the SOS Vojvodina Network. The associations are located throughout the entire territory of Vojvodina, so that each association receives the phone calls from the nearest municipality, and if the phone line is busy, the call is referred to the next nearest available association. Among the member CSOs, there are associations providing support to women with different abilities and Romani women, as well as in minority languages. There are other SOS Helplines run by CSOs, such as by Autonomous Women's Centre, operating 10am to 8 pm, free of charge.¹³⁶

¹²⁵ Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence [GREVIO], Comments Submitted by Serbia on GREVIO's Final Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Baseline Report), 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/grevioinf-2018-9/16808c1a4e>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

¹²⁶ Istanbul Convention Article 24 on telephone helplines: Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up state-wide round-the-clock (24/7) telephone helplines free of charge to provide advice to callers, confidentially or with due regard for their anonymity, in relation to all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

¹²⁷ Independent Advisory Group on Country Information, Country Policy and Information Note, Albania: Women Fearing Domestic Abuse, London, England, 2017, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/671397/Albania_-_DV_-_CPIN_-_v2.0_-_December_2017_.pdf, (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹²⁸ S. Futter-Orel, WAVE Country Report 2017, Women Against Violence Europe, Vienna, Austria, 2018, http://fileserver.wave-network.org/researchreports/WAVE_CR_2017.pdf, (accessed 15 October 2018).

¹²⁹ Apart from these two SOS helplines, in 2014, Medica Zenica was the first in BiH to open a country-wide helpline, covering the entirety of the country, aimed at helping and supporting survivors of war rape and sexual violence and their family members. It is available 24/7 and free of charge.

¹³⁰ S. Futter-Orel, WAVE Country Report 2017, Women Against Violence Europe, Vienna, Austria, 2018, http://fileserver.wave-network.org/researchreports/WAVE_CR_2017.pdf, (accessed 15 October 2018).

¹³¹ United States Department of State, 'Macedonia', Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277435.pdf>, (accessed 24 September 2018).

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ I. Shtraza, Doing it Right: Making Women's Networks Accessible with a Special Focus on Women from Minority and Disadvantaged Groups (Academic Paper), UN Women, 2018, http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2018/unw_wave-report_fc-web.pdf?la=en&vs=1127, (accessed 10 October 2018).

¹³⁴ The network consists of more than 20 women's rights organisations that provide services to women survivors of male violence.

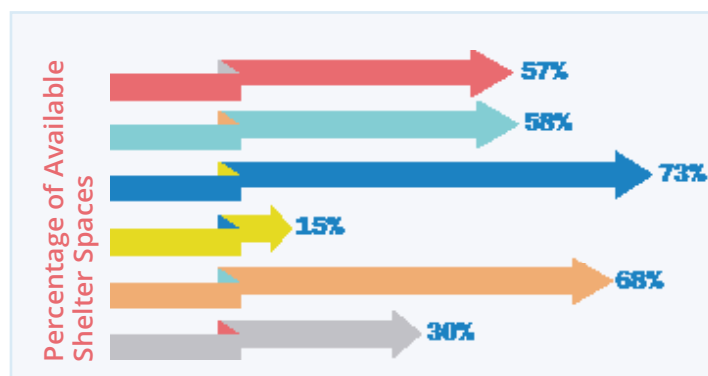
¹³⁵ 'SOS for Respecting the Laws', Women Against Violence Network, 17 September 2018, <https://www.zeneprotivnasilja.net/en/news/894-sos-for-respecting-the-laws>, (accessed 30 October 2018).

¹³⁶ 'New Free of Charge SOS Helpline of the Autonomous Women's Centre', Autonomous Women's Centre, 30 September 2018, <https://www.womenngo.org.rs/en/news/1213-new-free-of-charge-sos-telephone-helpline-of-the-autonomous-women-s-centre>, (accessed 30 October 2018).

Statistical data:¹³⁷

NATIONAL WOMEN'S SHELTERS 2018

Countries	Total Population	Meets the Minimum Standard	Number of Women's Shelters	Number of Beds in Women's Shelters	Bed Availability in Women's Shelters (%)	Number of Beds Needed in Women's Shelters	Number of Beds Missing in Women's Shelters
Albania	2 876 591	No	10	163	57%	288	125
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3 531 159	No	9	204	58%	353	149
Kosovo	1 920 079	No	9	140	73%	192	52
Macedonia	2 103 721	No	7	30	15%	210	180
Montenegro	642 550	No	3	44	68%	64	20
Serbia	7 040 272	No	15	217	30%	704	487



NATIONAL WOMEN'S HELPLINES 2018

Countries	National Women's Helplines	Free of Charge	Operating 24/7	Multilingual Support
Albania	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Kosovo	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Macedonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Montenegro	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Serbia	No	/	/	/
Total	5	5	5	4

¹³⁷ For this research report, statistics have been calculated in accordance with population numbers that derive from the most recent Census results available for each respective country for the years of 2017/18.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR COMBATTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

For the third year in a row in testing these indicators in the Women's Rights in the Western Balkans report, countries in the region yet again failed to ensure that state budgets have dedicated enough funds to combatting GBV. In each of the countries, the funds remain too low to effectively target the root causes of GBV. As an example, in Kosovo the absence of government funds has led to shelter closures, placing victims at risk of re-victimisation.

In general, the state and local budgets are not transparent enough to provide a comprehensive overview of the funding situation, and in some countries, funds allocated to combatting GBV, or for victim/survivor support are not specified. In the process of budgeting, there is very limited focus on this issue, showing that GBV and DV are far from a priority for Western Balkans governments. International funding for all countries examined constitutes a significant portion of the funding for national strategies, awareness-raising campaigns, trainings of professionals and referral mechanisms.

ALBANIA

Budgetary allocations for the period of 2014-2017 show that, although financial allocations related to social inclusion in 2017 almost doubled compared to 2014, they declined sharply in 2015 and 2016. With regards to spending on staff, the state report indicates an increased reliance on the gender equality structure, the entity within the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth responsible for issues related to violence against women, and on external consultants. Other governmental entities involved in combatting VAW, such as the state police, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education, do not have budgetary allocations specifically devoted to combatting GBV. At the local level, gender equality employees who have the role of local co-ordinators against DV remain to be appointed in 17 out of 61 municipalities.¹³⁸ There is a National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality in effect, but the strategy does not tackle the issue of public funding for women's support services. For instance, the national women's helpline in Albania had no allocated funding for the operation of the helpline, except for part of the support service costs.¹³⁹

According to information provided by the authorities, total expenditure for social inclusion activities for the years 2014-2017 is as follows: 102 336 EUR in 2014, 207 993 EUR in 2015, 294 265 EUR for 2016 and 182 593 EUR for 2017. According to information provided by the authorities, the state police budgeted 664 104 EUR for 2017 compared to 378 400 EUR in 2014 for the identification of DV cases, and 663 993 EUR in 2017 compared to 378 400 EUR in 2014 for immediate protective measures for women and girls. These allocations indicate an increasing trend over time in state police budgets dedicated to these protection orders.

Total costs for implementing the National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality amount to about 2.79 million ALL, amounting to approximately 22.3 million EUR. Donor funding accounts for at least half of the expenditure related to gender equality and GBV.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence [GREVIO], Baseline Evaluation Report: Albania, Strasbourg, France, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>, (accessed 5 October 2018), p. 18.

¹³⁹ Civil Society Strengthening Platform [CSSP], and Women Against Violence Europe [WAVE], Benefits and Challenges the CSSP Platform has faced in the Process of Implementing and Monitoring the Istanbul Convention (Briefing Paper), <https://www.wave-network.org/wp-content/uploads/CSSPBriefing-paper-FINAL.pdf>, (accessed 10 October 2018).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 18.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

According to the Republika Srpska budget for 2017, allocated funds for the Implementation of the Strategy for combating DV were 12 000 BAM, amounting to 6 131 EUR.¹⁴¹ This amount is far too low for shelters to be able to operate according to standards, and it is not an amount that shelters can rely on for long-term planning and stability. The funds from the government budget of the Republika Srpska are allocated for the temporary accommodation or shelters for the victims of DV, indicating that little is budgeted towards preventing or mitigating DV. According to the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, 70% of all the funds from the total budget are provided annually, while 30% of the determined accommodation price is provided by the survivor's municipal government. As for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to its Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, 30% of the funds for financing the temporary accommodation of victims/survivors of violence are provided from the canton budget, and the remaining 70% from the budget of the Federation of BiH.¹⁴²

The drafting of a policy that will regulate the criteria for financing the temporary accommodation of victims/survivors of DV in safe houses is currently under way.¹⁴³ The same report states that approximately 50 000 BAM (25 544 EUR) was allocated from the budget of the Agency for Gender Equality within the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees in the Federation of BiH to CSOs that implement projects related to cooperation with state institutions, efficient prevention of violence, and protection for survivors.¹⁴⁴

In 2017 budget for the Federation of BiH, 162 000 BAM (82 792 EUR) were allocated for CSOs to support the implementation of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence.¹⁴⁵

It is worth mentioning that BiH is the only country that has recently conducted research on costs for survivors of violence. At a regional meeting in Sarajevo, organised by the OSCE Mission to BiH in September 2018¹⁴⁶, it was presented that the total cost for victims/survivors of violence in BiH is around 65.79 million BAM (34.6 million EUR). The cost of providing basic services to one DV survivor amounts to 2 102 BAM, approximately 1 075 EUR. These are the results of research conducted in six locations in BiH on the amount of costs incurred in assisting and supporting DV survivors. The analysis was exclusively related to reported cases of DV. Costs were calculated on the basis of direct costs that are possible to measure, the cost of missing services, indirect measurable costs, as well as the foreseen costs due to non-prevention of the violence.¹⁴⁷

The state is responsible for ensuring adequate and continuous financing of safe houses and shelters for accommodating DV survivors through national and cantonal budgets, and through systematically monitoring cases of violence so as to improve public policies and their implementation in this area. This issue, however, has not yet been adequately resolved; in May of 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH rejected a motion for a grant agreement between the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards the improvement of women's safety and towards a response to GBV, and shelter financing.¹⁴⁸

KOSOVO

It was not possible to obtain the budget for the Republic of Kosovo in due course for this report, thus all information provided is from organisational reports, written predominantly by women's CSOs. According to these sources, financial support for combating GBV is almost non-existent. The major indication is the fact that shelters lack sufficient and sustainable financing. While shelters have often struggled financially, in 2017 they faced several additional barriers and challenges. First, one of the shelters in Pristina opened in early 2017 amid allegations of financial mismanagement. Following these allegations, shelters lost some of their planned foreign funding. Without foreign donations, and following delays in the government of Kosovo transferring other funds, by December of 2017 all shelters for DV survivors were temporarily closed.¹⁴⁹ The government allocated emergency funds to shelters in the meantime, but no long-term financial commitment was given. Shelters are partially financed by local government, while the rest of the support comes from foreign donors. International donor organisations, however, expect full institutional commitment to protection of victims/survivors of domestic abuse.¹⁵⁰ The closures placed women and children at risk and increased costs for police who had to transport women between cities for shelter and court hearings. The closure of the shelter in Pristina also strained the other, already over-crowded, shelters.

At the same time, Kosovo has successfully set up the first functional survivor compensation programme in the region. The Law on Protection against Domestic Violence was adopted in 2015, and became functional in 2017 when Kosovo's Ministry of Finance allocated the first budgetary amount of 100 000 EUR towards this programme. This late allocation came as a result of disagreements on where exactly the money for survivor compensations should come.¹⁵¹

¹⁴¹ Government of Republika Srpska, Budget, 2017, <http://www.narodnaskupstinars.net/?q=la/akti/bud%C5%BEet/bud%C5%BEet-republike-srpske-za-2017-godinu>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

¹⁴² N. Vučić, 'Nasilje nad ženama u bh. društvu: Kako dalje?', N1, 17 November 2017, <http://ba.n1info.com/a227409/Vijesti/Vijesti/Svaka-druga-zena-iskusila-nasilje.html>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation Budget, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ 'OSCE Holds Regional Meeting on Combatting Violence against Women in the Western Balkans', Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/393002>, (accessed 26 October 2018).

¹⁴⁷ Ministry of Justice, Veliki Troškovi Pružanja Usluga Žrtvama Nasilja, Government of Serbia, <https://iskljucinasilje.rs/rs/aktuelnosti/veliki-troskovi-pruzanja-usluga-zrtvama-nasilja/>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

¹⁴⁸ D. Pandurević and R. Ibrahimović (eds.), Izvještaj o Ispunjenju Decembarskih Zahtjeva 2014-2018, Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar u ime Inicijative za Monitoring Evropskih Integracija Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018, <http://eu-monitoring.ba/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HRP-dec.zahtjevi-01.10.2018.-WEB-2.pdf>, (accessed 5 October 2018), p. 15.

¹⁴⁹ A. Berisha, N. Farnsworth and D. Hoti, From Words to Actions? Monitoring the Institutional Response to Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovo, 2017, <http://www.womensnetwork.org/documents/20180312142859762.pdf>, (accessed 3 October 2018), p. 28.

¹⁵⁰ Women's shelters in Kosovo at the mercy of government whims, <https://newsmavens.com/news/smoke-signals/1530/women-s-shelters-in-kosovo-at-the-mercy-of-government-whims>, (accessed 21 October 2018).

¹⁵¹ A. Qosaj-Mustafa and D. Morina, Compensation to Victims of Crime: Response to Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Cases in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, 2018, http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Final_English_Version_141863.pdf, (accessed 25 September 2018), p. 10.

MACEDONIA

The main institution responsible for combating violence against women in Macedonia is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Ministry's budget does not indicate the sum allocated for combatting GBV or DV. The only institutions and activities included in the budget that are financially supported by the state and which may be indirectly related to GBV are the following: Construction, equipping and maintenance of facilities for social care: 19 400 MDK (equivalent to approximately 315 EUR), Institutions for social protection: 208 797 MDK (3 393 EUR), Centres for social work: 495 565 MDK (8 053 EUR)¹⁵² It is not possible to conclude how many, if any, of these funds are foreseen specifically for GBV prevention or programming. Authors of the newsletter on DV, issued by Macedonian CSO Health Education and Research Association, refer to the budget for combatting DV as non-existent.¹⁵³

MONTENEGRO

The government of Montenegro has not shown significant initiative regarding promotion and implementation of the Istanbul Convention, nor has it allocated funds for this purpose. It is impossible to assess how much funds the state allocates from its budget for the programmes of prevention and protection from DV.¹⁵⁴

The Law on Social and Child Protection stipulates that shelters should be financed by municipalities, but all shelters for GBV victims/survivors in Montenegro are managed by CSOs and financed mainly from foreign funds and donations, while the support from the state is sporadic and insufficient.¹⁵⁵

The Action Plan for the second Strategy for the Protection from Domestic Violence (2016 -2020) states that funds for financing activities foreseen by the strategy should be provided by relevant ministries, as well as additional donations from international organisations. The measures defined in the Action Plan mainly related to the organisation of seminars, analyses of compliance with the Istanbul Convention and conducting training in accordance with licensed programs that are not yet in place. Through these measures, emphasis was placed on programs that are supposed to be carried out by CSOs, with the help of international donors rather than state bodies. A possible conclusion from this second Strategy is that the Montenegrin government did not intend to allocate funds to programming for the protection of DV, but rather to rely on support of international donors.¹⁵⁶

At the same time, the government of Montenegro's budget for 2017 committed 1.41 million EUR to the financing of social and child protection services at the local level. This information is not sufficient to assess the degree of social services provided for victims/survivors of DV at the national and local levels.¹⁵⁷ Adequately addressing whether these provisions have been achieved is measured through an assessment of whether or not they have been implemented in continuity and on a longer term. There are still no conditions, namely models of financing social services for survivors of DV, at the national and local level, and the majority of support is provided by the national SOS hotline.¹⁵⁸ According to a monitoring study on DV in Montenegro, the only visible financial supports provided are for the operation of the National SOS helpline in Podgorica and Ulcinj, as well as providing the space for shelters to operate in Podgorica and Plevlje.¹⁵⁹

SERBIA

To implement the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (2014-2018), the total allocated sum was 4.034 billion RSD (approximately 33.6 million EUR). Of this amount, more than 2 billion RSD (16.68 million EUR) was allocated from the state Budget, and 2.032 billion RSD (over 16.9 million EUR) came from external donors. For the Action Plan (2016-2018) to implement the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020), 21.15 million RSD (176 250 EUR) was allocated from the budget, along with external donor funds of a yet-unspecified amount. The amount of funds for activities financed by local self-governments has not been specified by the time of the writing of this report.¹⁶⁰ It has also not been possible to determine how much of this funding has been allocated for DV or GBV prevention and protection.

¹⁵² Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Budget, Republic of Macedonia, 2018, <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/dokumenti/2018/%D0%91%D1%83%D1%9F%D0%B5%D1%82%202018%20-%20%D0%9C%D0%A2%D0%A1%D0%9F.pdf>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

¹⁵³ Асоцијација за Здравствена Едукација и Истражување [HERA], Билтенот за Семејно Планирање 8, Скопје, Macedonia, 2017, <https://hera.org.mk/bilten-za-semejno-planiranje-br-8/>, (accessed 5 October 2018).

¹⁵⁴ J. Hajduković et al., NGO Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/report-ngo-montenegro-2/168073c980>, (accessed 25 September 2018), p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁵⁶ B. Zeković, J. Radulović, and M. Vučelić (eds.), Domestic Violence in Montenegro: Theory and Practice (Monitoring Study), Podgorica, Montenegro, 2017, p. 43.

<http://sospodgorica.me/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SOS-Domestic-violence-in-MNE-Monitoring-Study.pdf>, (accessed 25 September 2018), p. 43.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.43

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁶⁰ GREVIO, Comments Submitted by Serbia on GREVIO's Final Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Baseline Report), 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/grevioinf-2018-9/16808c1a4e>, (accessed 25 September 2018), p. 12.

PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF DATA ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The process of monitoring, collecting, as well as distributing, data related to GBV in the Western Balkan countries is the responsibility of the different institutions and service agencies. Furthermore, one of the requirements in the Istanbul Convention is to not only monitor, collect and distribute data, but to also make this anonymised data publicly available and accessible.

In general, service agencies in the Western Balkans do not see data collection as their primary responsibility. Data available through these agencies are often not collected in a systematic way and consequently exist in a non-standardised form. Thus, the quality of the recording and processing of data is not always of a standard high enough for the production of national statistics. It is also not always suitable for monitoring and evaluation of policies and service provision on VAW. These problems result from inadequate training, resources and capacity for those collecting the data, poor coordination among agencies and sectors, and poor support to carry through with the data collection and distribution. Administrative data should not be collected solely for internal use, but their suitability for use within statistics should be ensured. This will also allow the use of conclusions deriving from data analysis for dissemination to a wide audience as well as to policymakers in order to inform legislation, interventions and policy measures on prevention, protection and prosecution of GBV cases.

ALBANIA

In Albania, the National Council on Gender Equality is in charge of monitoring and evaluating the implemented measures for combating GBV. In November 2017, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence Against Women (GREVIO) in their baseline report on Albania expressed the concern that this very demanding task has simply been added to the workload of the gender equality sector without assigning any dedicated staff or budget to manage the functioning of the National Council.¹⁶¹

Most of the concerned stakeholders in Albania already engage in the collection of data on some or all forms of violence to varying degrees. Data collection is not fully harmonized across the various sectors or accessible through comprehensive information systems. Data collection by law enforcement and criminal courts cover the annual numbers of offences reported to the police and those referred to prosecution, as well as numbers of convictions.

Albania also has a centralised body, the State Institute for Statistics (INSTAT), to coordinate administrative data collection at national level. INSTAT uses the collected data for the purposes of producing gendered statistics for different categories of offence. INSTAT's annual publication *Women and Men in Albania* contains data on rates of crime by gender of survivor, with a specific reference to the offence of DV.¹⁶² Data regarding protection orders issued by the civil law courts are collected, but they are not published or otherwise systematically made available to the public.

¹⁶¹ GREVIO, Baseline Evaluation Report: Albania, Strasbourg, France, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>, (accessed 5 October 2018), p.12

¹⁶² Institute of Statistics [INSTAT], *Women and Men in Albania 2017*, Tirana, Albania, 2017, http://www.instat.gov.al/media/2316/burrrat_dhe_grat_ne_shqiperi_2017_libri.pdf, (accessed 26 September 2018).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In BiH, a comprehensive and harmonised system for monitoring and data collection on cases of violence against women is still lacking. There is no methodology of monitoring and collecting the data that is used in both the Federation and Republika Srpska.¹⁶³ The two entities have their own institutions for monitoring and fighting both GBV and DV. In the Federation of BiH there is the Gender Centre as part of the Federation's government which monitors the status of women and their ability to exercise their rights. In Republika Srpska there is a council for fighting DV that was established on the basis of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, which coordinates the work of referral mechanisms in DV cases, including the Ministry of Interior.¹⁶⁴ Although these two institutions monitor and analyse the situation related to GBV within their respective mandates and their entities, there is no evidence that they cooperate or exchange data at any level.

The Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH created a database on cases of DV in accordance with the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, which allowed the data entry on police reports of DV to be used for record-keeping and monitoring of statistics regarding protective measures issued by social welfare centres, housing in shelters, and calls made to the SOS helpline. At the time of writing this report, data was still being entered and processed.¹⁶⁵ This data collection process, however, has not yet generated results in the form of any official, publicly available data on the number of cases of VAW in the Federation in the last several years. The official report Women and Men in Bosnia and Herzegovina, issued by the Federal Office of Statistics of the Federation and directly related to gender statistics, neither provides information on the number of cases, nor statistics regarding criminal charges/acts.¹⁶⁶ The only information available on cases is that which appears in BiH media, in the form of statements made by officials or information gleaned from reporters. One such example is when journalist and activist Milkica Milojević stated that in BiH, approximately 2 700 cases of DV are recorded annually, while 300 to 500 women seek protection in safe houses.¹⁶⁷

The Gender Centre of Republika Srpska created a special analysis of institutional responses to femicide cases. According to this analysis, there were inadequate records of survivors' complaints, inadequate information exchange between institutions, non-recognition of GBV and gender inequality as the main cause of femicide, and a lack of sensibility and support for the survivors.¹⁸

KOSOVO

In Kosovo, the competence for coordinating measures and policies in the field of DV presently falls on the Office of the National Coordinator against Domestic Violence (NCDV), with the Agency of Gender Equality acting as Deputy National Coordinator. Selected by default as the person serving as the Deputy Minister of Justice, the NCDV is charged with coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of policies, activities and actions foreseen in the National Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence and Action Plan (2016-2020).¹⁶⁹

In Kosovo, social, judicial, administrative, and service-based data collection practices are weak in relation to all forms of VAW. Government statistics are only sporadically collected, and for the 2017 and 2018 reporting period, it was not possible to find official reports on GBV from any of the relevant state institutions. The Kosovo Agency of Statistics provides only general data on jurisprudence. This represents a challenge when measuring the scale and nature of the problem. Information on this issue comes from media and the reports created by international organisations. For both, the main source of information and data comes from police statistics. Sometimes these data, even though they derive from the same source, do not match.

MACEDONIA

In 2018, the government of Macedonia ratified the Istanbul Convention. As a Council of Europe member state, Macedonia is obligated to establish rules regulating administrative data collection and the associated official statistics that are in line with the Convention.

The legal framework for VAW is limited in that it does not recognise all forms of GBV. DV is the only form of GBV which is regulated with a special Law on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence. The law is not gender-sensitive, does not define DV as a form of GBV and does not recognise girls and women as a particularly exposed group to GBV. Despite the established legal obligation, Macedonia did not succeed in improving the existing systems of data collection to provide detailed statistics on DV and to ensure availability and accessibility of data to the public. Moreover, the state neither provides statistics of survivors within various forms of GBV, nor any strategies for mitigation and protection from it. The absence of such a strategy is especially critical because strategies of this kind provide the state with concrete steps to improving the system of protection for women survivors of violence, and a specific budgetary plan for its implementation. In the area of access to justice, one of the main problems in acquiring the right to free legal aid is the establishment of the status of "victim". The Law on Free Legal Aid requires the authorised association of citizens receiving free legal aid to submit confirmations that they are reported and identified as victims of DV in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and in the Centre for Social Work.¹⁷⁰

Despite the fact that Macedonia's Law on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence foresee setting up a comprehensive data collection system, this is not in place and therefore it is difficult to find detailed information about the actions of relevant institutions. The National Coordinative Body for combating Domestic Violence was formed in January 2018. This body has a task to monitor and analyse the national situation regarding DV, to coordinate the activities of the competent institutions and to propose measures for combatting DV.¹⁷¹

Administrative data about GBV and DV in Macedonia in the reporting period derive mainly from CSOs and their shadow reports, such as reports produced by the National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.¹⁷² In July, a survey on the range of sexual violence in Macedonia was launched. Between July 28th, 2017 until September 1st, 2017, the research sought to assess the attitudes, convictions and experiences of Macedonians in the area of sexual violence using an accessible online survey research method.¹⁷³

¹⁶³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW], Šesti Periodični Izveštaj Bosne i Hercegovine o Provedbi Konvencije o Eliminaciji Svih Oblika Diskriminacije Žena (2013-2016), 2017, https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/170823_VI-periodicni-CEDAW-Izvestaj-za-BiH_Nacrt.pdf, (accessed 26 September 2018), p. 21.

¹⁶⁴ 'Гендер Центар Републике Српске, Активности', Vlada Republike Srpske, <http://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/centri/gendercentarrs/AKTI/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed 28 October 2018).

¹⁶⁵ Vlada Gender Centar Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, Baza Podataka o Nasilju u Porodici, <http://www.gcfbih.gov.ba/baza-podataka-o-nasilju-u-porodici/>, (accessed 26 October 2018).

¹⁶⁶ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Women and Men in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018, http://www.bhas.ba/tematskibilteni/FAM_00_2017_TB_0_BS.pdf, (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹⁶⁷ U BiH Godisnje 2700 Slučajeva Nasilja u Porodici, Oslobođenje, 29 September 2017, <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/u-bih-se-godisnje-2-700-slucajeva-nasilja-u-porodici>, (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹⁶⁸ CEDAW, Šesti Periodični Izveštaj Bosne i Hercegovine o Provedbi Konvencije o Eliminaciji Svih Oblika Diskriminacije Žena (2013-2016), 2017, https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/170823_VI-periodicni-CEDAW-Izvestaj-za-BiH_Nacrt.pdf, (accessed 26 September 2018), p. 22.

¹⁶⁹ P. Krol, Mapping Support Services for Victims of Violence against Women in Kosovo*, Council of Europe, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/seminar-pristina-report-eng/16807316df>, (accessed 26 September 2018), p. 9.

¹⁷⁰ Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, Submission to United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in its Adoption of a List of Issue Regarding the Sixth Periodical Report of the Republic of Macedonia Under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (List of Issues Prior to Reporting), 2018, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/MKD/INT_CEDAW_NGO_MKD_30018_E.pdf, (accessed 12 October 2018).

¹⁷¹ 'Održana Konstitutivna Sednica na Nacionalnoto Koordinativno Telo Protiv Semejno Nasiljstvo', A1ON.MK, 22 January 2018, <https://a1on.mk/archives/845963>, (accessed 28 October 2018).

¹⁷² 'About Us', National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, <http://www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk/en/research-and-development/>, (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹⁷³ Националната мрежа против насилство врз жените и семејно насилство, Годишен извештај на Национална мрежа против насилство врз жените и семејно насилство, Skopje, Macedonia, 2017, <http://www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Godishen-izvestaj-2016-Natsionalna-mrezha.pdf>, (accessed 26 September 2018), p. 5.

MONTENEGRO

The establishment and full functioning of the Social Welfare Information System is part of the reform and capacity-building process of the system of social protection in Montenegro. It had been foreseen in 2015 in the Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence 2016-2020, issued by Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. This information system is recognised as one of the most important prerequisites for monitoring GBV and DV at state level.¹⁷⁴ Unfortunately, in the report of the functioning and the outcomes of this comprehensive electronic system of processing, including monitoring and reporting all cases related to social protection, there is no mention of any specific registry of cases related to GBV or DV. Included in the monitoring are the registries of users of social care as well as workers in the domain of social care, without further explanation of the benefits these registries provide.¹⁷⁵ Though there are some monitoring mechanisms being employed, they are insufficient and do not provide the information necessary to create an accurate assessment of the issues or rates of GBV or DV. A comprehensive report that gathered all relevant data in 2017 was written by four leading CSOs providing specialised support services to DV victims/survivors. The author organisations were Women's Rights Centre, Women's Safe House, SOS Telephone for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Nikšić, and the SOS Telephone for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Podgorica. In order to collect the relevant data related to GBV and DV, the authors used data scattered throughout different sources of information, including: administrative data, official statistics, research and analysis reports by local and international CSOs, legal and policy documents, and the Ombudsperson's annual reports.¹⁷⁶

As the time of writing this report, there were no official statistical data on femicide in Montenegro.¹⁷⁷

SERBIA

In the conclusion of the National Strategy for Gender Equality for 2016-2020, one of the main strategic goals for this period is reducing sensationalist reporting on VAW as well as providing regular and gender-sensitive information to the public on the outcomes of measures to preventing and eliminating VAW, protection mechanisms and sanctions imposed on perpetrators, while ensuring that information, statistics and data in this area are made available to the public.¹⁷⁸

Still, Serbia continues to struggle with monitoring, processing and exchanging data regarding GBV. A complete and uniform database has not been established, and the methodology of data collection has not been harmonised, which means that data remains non-compatible and non-comparable. One objective of the National Strategy of Gender Equality for the period of 2016-2020 was to establish a uniform and standardised system for data collection on all forms of VAW, with data segregation based on type of violence, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim/survivor and the extent of social vulnerability.¹⁷⁹ Currently there are several institutions that actively monitor VAW and DV.

The leading state administrator that monitors violence in family and intimate partner relationships in the social welfare system is the Republic Institute for Social Protection, which collects annual data and prepares reports regarding the work of social welfare institutions and licensed service providers. In addition, in the past year, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has significantly improved its records on cases of DV and GBV, but this data is not accessible by the general public. These institutions operate with different methodologies with a lack of universalised methods. Furthermore, they do not inform the public about their findings, apart from occasional press releases and press conferences.¹⁸⁰ Despite the improvements in record-keeping, these state institutions lack the crucial factor of making the information and data accessible.

¹⁷⁴ Ministarstvo za Rad i Socijalnu Zaštitu, Strategija Zaštite od Nasilja u Porodici 2016-2020, Government of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro, 2015, <http://www.minradiss.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=223388&rType=2&file=Strategija%20zastite%20od%20nasilja%20u%20porodici%202016-2020.docx>, (accessed 26 September 2018), p. 13.

¹⁷⁵ Ministarstvo Rada i Socijalnog Staranja, 'Socijalni Karton', Ministarstvo Rada i Socijalnog Staranja, Government of Montenegro, <http://www.minradiss.gov.me/informacije/socijalnikarton>, (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹⁷⁶ J. Hajduković, et al., NGO Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/report-ngo-montenegro-2/168073c980>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁷⁸ Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 2016-01-14, 05 No: 56-14173/2015.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ GREVIO, Comments Submitted by Serbia on GREVIO's Final Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Baseline Report), 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/grevioinf-2018-9/16808c1a4e>, (accessed 25 September 2018), p. 17

NUMBER OF SANCTIONED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CASES

Sanctions imposed on perpetrators of GBV must be seen as punitive but more importantly, as protective measures. The protective and punitive role of the sanctions against GBV are intertwined and the literature indicates that they are rarely considered separately. Sanctioned cases of GBV could refer to any of the three forms of measures: restraining and protective orders issued by civil courts, restraining and protective orders issued by criminal justice system, and emergency barring orders. Western Balkan countries only recently became familiar with the possibility and advantages of emergency barring orders.¹⁸¹ For example, in the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) report on emergency barring orders, respondents from Albania and Macedonia were not able to provide any information on the existence of those orders, while Serbia and BiH negated it. Only Montenegro and Kosovo confirmed that such measures are available.¹⁸²

Following 2015, the officials in Western Balkan countries showed upwards trends in becoming increasingly familiar with the legislation and the possible measures that could be issued. The terminology and the interpretation of these measures varied in the region's respective countries. In Albania, for example, there are immediate protection orders (protection orders issued within 15 days) which can be issued only by the courts, and the court's decisions are final.¹⁸³ BiH and Serbia introduced the possibility of emergency protection measures. In BiH, these measures could be also issued only by the courts and applied for within 24 hours, upon the request of police officials.¹⁸⁴ In Serbia, The Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence introduced emergency barring orders which could be executed directly by the police.

In Kosovo, under the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, definitions of acts of DV are offered in order to issue protection orders only

in civil proceedings.¹⁸⁵ This law defines protection orders as an order issued in a court decision, which provides protection measures for the survivor, whereas emergency protection orders are those that are issued temporarily through a court decision, and finally, the law defines temporary emergency protection orders as those issued outside of working court hours.¹⁸⁶ In Macedonia, the institutions responsible for deciding about protective measures are judiciaries.¹⁸⁷

It is difficult to estimate the impact of the legislation and the efficiency of the court decisions in the countries in the region. A general remark among women's organisations in Western Balkan countries is that the imposition of sanctions is neither effective nor proportionate to the offence. Apart from being ineffective, the legal system in some countries reflects the general apologetic attitude towards GBV and perpetrators in the public realm.

¹⁸¹ This is in accordance with Article 52 (Emergency Barring Orders) of the Istanbul Convention: Parties shall take necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the competent authorities are granted the power to order, in situations of immediate danger, a perpetrator of domestic violence to vacate the residence of the victim or person at risk for a sufficient period of time and to prohibit the perpetrator from entering the residence of or contacting the victim or person at risk. Measures taken pursuant to this article shall give priority to the safety of victims or persons at risk.

¹⁸² Women Against Violence Europe [WAVE], Emergency Barring Orders, 2015, http://files.wave-network.org/researchreports/WAVE_Report_2015_Emergency_Barring_Orders.pdf, (accessed 3 October 2018).

¹⁸³ 'Legal Changes to Offer Better Protection to Albania Domestic Violence Victims', Tirana Times, 14 November 2017, <http://www.tiranatimes.com/?p=134532>, (accessed 30 October 2018).

¹⁸⁴ Vlada Republike Srpske, Informacija o Implementaciji Strategije za Suzbijanje Nasilja u Porodici Republike Srpske (2014-2019) za 2015. i 2016. Godinu, Banja Luka, 2017, <http://e-vijecenarodars.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Informacija-o-implementaciji-Strategije-za-suzbijanje-nasilja-u-porodici.pdf>, (accessed 30 October 2018), p. 19.

¹⁸⁵ Republic of Kosovo, Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, Law No.03/L -182.

¹⁸⁶ A. Qosaj-Mustafa, D. Morina, Compensation to Victims of Crime: Response to Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Cases in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, 2018, http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Final_English_Version_141863.pdf, (accessed 25 September 2018).

¹⁸⁷ E. Димушевска and С. Шкријељ, Мапирање на Достапните Услуги За Жени Жртви на Насилство во Република Македонија, Скопје, Macedonia, 2016, http://www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Mapiran-e-na-servisi_final.pdf, (accessed 3 October 2018).

ALBANIA

Apart from not being up-to-date, information about sanctions and measures imposed are not publicly available. The scarce information that is possible to find is most often in media reporting, which is not an official or peer-reviewed source.

The High Council of Justice in Albania requested information from its inspectorate and administration department on data related to domestic violence from 28 first instance and appeal courts for the period of January 2016 to April 2017. The report was presented at the High Council of Justice meeting by Chief Spokeswoman Marsida Xhaferllari.¹⁸⁸ According to this report, during the period between January 2016 and April 2017, 6 307 cases of DV were reported. Of this number, there were 1 128 appeals against court decisions. In addition, 250 court cases have been delayed, which amounts to 4.8% of the all cases. This percentage is not assessed as problematic in this report. There are 283 rejected appeals, 1 245 suspended cases (1 223 in the first instance and 22 in the second instance). The reasons for the suspension varied: some of the suspensions were due to the court's preference for family reunification, another judicial decision was made for the same case, fault claim of the appellant, the defendant was prosecuted, or the death of the accused person. There were 3 401 remaining cases which resulted in some form of protection measures.¹⁸⁹

According to the 12 Districts Directories of Police in Albania, there were total 4 543 reported cases of DV in 2017. From this number, 2 593 included requests for protection orders, 129 perpetrators had violated the protection orders, 1 412 were penal acts, 654 arrested, and 92 cases were suspended.¹⁹⁰

State Police sources reported to Deutsche Welle that in Albania, each day two men are arrested for acts of DV. During the period between January and August 2017, approximately 3 000 cases of violence had been convicted and 478 men were arrested for DV. During that same reporting period, Tirana's courts reviewed 600 women's requests for protection orders for protection from spouses or former offending spouses.¹⁹¹

Finally, the Amnesty International report for Albania for 2018 provides information only regarding immediate protection orders. By June 1st of 2018, 420 immediate protection orders had been issued.¹⁹²

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in both the Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska prescribes all necessary protective measures as in other European countries, including removal from an apartment, house or other housing and prohibition on returning to an apartment, house or other residential area; prohibition of approaching the survivor of violence; prohibition of harassment and harassment of a person subject to violence; obligatory psychosocial treatment; mandatory treatment of addiction; temporary detention and/or detention.¹⁹³

CSOs that are actively engaged in monitoring GBV in BiH point to a number of problems in the application of laws and procedures. Court proceedings last up to four months, cases of sexual violence are postponed without obvious reason or explanation, there are frequent changes of prosecutors, and underage persons testify without the presence of qualified persons, to name a few of the issues.¹⁹⁴

With regards to statistical data of municipal and cantonal courts, cantonal prosecutors' offices in the Federation of BiH include data on the number of cases for individual offenses, perpetrators of crimes and victims, as well as the number and type of sentences, and the number and type of protective measures for DV. In 2016, most of the measures employed were restraining orders, in 265 of the cases, while only 18 protective measures employed were the temporary deprivation of liberty and retention.¹⁹⁵ There were no data on sanctions and protective measures for 2017 and 2018. The only official data available were from the statistics on adult perpetrators of criminal offences, provided by the Agency for Statistics of BiH. According to this information, there were 88 persons accused for the crime against sexual integrity, out of which 77 persons were convicted.¹⁹⁷ For the crime against marriage and family, 696 persons accused and 630 were convicted.¹⁹⁶ As in previous editions of this publication, research for this edition also indicated that there are no disaggregated data regarding survivors, perpetrators, types of offences and penalties, thus it was not possible to determine the exact number of cases that are in relation to violence against women or DV specifically.¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁸ 'Raporti i KLD për Dhunën në Familje, në 16 Muaj mbi 6 Mijë Çështje në Gjyq', Mapo, 30 January 2018, <http://www.mapo.al/raporti-i-kld-per-dhunen-ne-familje-ne-16-muaj-mbi-6-mije-ceshtje-ne-gjyq/>, (accessed 3 October 2018).

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ This information was shared with the authors of this report by the Gender Alliance for Development Centre in Albania.

¹⁹¹ A. Ruci, 'Shqipëri: Dhuna në Familje "Plagë e Pashëruar për Shoqërinë"', Deutsche Welle, 8 September 2017, <https://www.dw.com/sq/shqip%C3%ABri-dhuna-n%C3%AB-familje-plag%C3%AB-e-pash%C3%ABruar-p%C3%AB-shoq%C3%ABin%C3%AB/a-40421084>, (accessed 3 October 2018).

¹⁹² 'Albania 2017/2018', Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/albania/report-albania/>, (accessed 3 October 2018).

¹⁹³ Helsinški Parlament Građana Banjaluka & Prava za Sve, Alternativni CEDAW Izvještaj: Izvještaj Organizacija Civilnog Društva o Primjeni Zaključnih Zapažanja i Preporuka CEDAW Komiteta za Bosnu i Hercegovinu 2013 - 2017, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2016, <http://hcnabl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CEDaW-WEB-final-novembar-2016.pdf>, (accessed 3 October 2018), p. 52.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁹⁵ Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Šesti Periodični Izvještaj Bosne i Hercegovine o Provedbi Konvencije o Eliminaciji Svih Oblika Diskriminacije Žena (2013-2016), 2017, https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/170823_VI-periodicni-CEDAW-Izvjestaj-za-BiH_Nacr.pdf, (accessed 3 October 2018), p. 21.

¹⁹⁶ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Adult Perpetrators of Criminal Offences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Number 7, 2017, http://www.bhas.ba/saopštenja/2018/CRI_02_2017_Y1_0_BS.pdf, (accessed 3 October 2018).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

KOSOVO

Kosovo has several legal and institutional mechanisms in place to mitigate and deal with cases of DV. DV is not a criminal offence according to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo. In relation to cases of DV, police must respond to reports of threats or acts of domestic violence, they are obligated to accompany survivors when they take their personal belongings, and in cases when police suspect a crime involving DV, they must immediately arrest the alleged perpetrator. In Kosovo, there is a Victim Protection and Assistance Office which has a toll-free SOS hotline through which persons can report violence and receive assistance in relation to criminal actions, including DV. The Victim Protection and Assistance Office has victim advocates located in seven regions of the country, who assist persons affected by crimes of trafficking, DV, crimes against sexual integrity, homicide, and robbery. Regarding DV cases, victim advocates meet with victims/survivors immediately after they have reported DV to police.¹⁹⁸

The law treats DV as a civil matter unless the survivor suffers bodily harm or another criminal offense. Failure to comply with a civil court's judgment relating to a DV case is a criminal and prosecutable offense, although prosecutions for the reporting period between 2017 and 2018 for this offense were rare. According to the Kosovo Women's Network, more than two-thirds of women in Kosovo have been victims/survivors of DV. When survivors pressed charges, police DV units conducted investigations and transferred cases to prosecutors, though the rate of prosecution was low. Advocates and court observers asserted that prosecutors and judges favoured family unification over survivor protection, with protective orders sometimes allowing the perpetrator to remain in the family home while a case was pending. Sentences were frequently overly-lenient, ranging from judicial reprimands to imprisonment of six months to five years.¹⁹⁹

In 2017, the number of DV cases reported to the police in Kosovo was not made public, but rather obtained by researchers working on the Compensation to Victims of Crime report, published in 2018.²⁰⁰

GBV survivor advocates stated that working with GBV cases is a challenge, mainly due to insufficient support from other relevant institutions.²⁰¹ Another obstacle is re-victimisation, which advocates attribute in part to the absence of centres for psychosocial treatment of perpetrators in Kosovo. One survivor advocate commented that they "have frequent cases of recidivists who commit a criminal offense and do not stop violence. If we are dealing with people who need psychosocial treatment, then they should be sent to proper institutions and not left home. This way the victim receives better treatment."²⁰²

According to the data provided by Victim Protection and Assistance Office, in 2017 there were 407 requests for protection orders, 51 requests for emergency protection order, and one request for temporary emergency protection order. As for the further procedures in the courts, 299 cases were approved by the court, 12 were refused by the court, 69 were withdrawn by the party with a ruling, 10 cases include violation of an existing protection order, and 8 request were issued for the extension of an existing protection order. The sentencing of DV perpetrators with imprisonment hardly ever occurs in Kosovo. Lirije Kajtazi, a Member of Parliament and the First Vicechair of the Committee on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Missing Persons and Petitions, told Radio Free Europe that DV-related murderers are not receiving the deserved punishment due to the negligence of the judiciary, which is confirmed by lawyers, and which she considers unforgivable, given that the heaviest sentence that has been imposed for such a crime has been 5 years.²⁰³

MACEDONIA

In Macedonia, the Law on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence entered into force on January 1st, 2015. It incorporates the responsibilities of the following stakeholders in terms of providing measures to protect victims/survivors of DV: the Centre for Social Work, the Ministry of Interior, health institutions, local self-government units and CSOs. The institutions responsible for deciding about protective measures are judiciaries.²⁰⁴

In 2016, according to data from 23 Basic Courts in the country, 401 proposals for imposing temporary protection measures for DV cases had been submitted. According to available data regarding the gender structure of the survivors, 76.04% were women, 21.73% men, and 2.24% were children, whereas 94.6% of perpetrators were men and 5.4% were women.²⁰⁵

In comparison, there was an increase in the number of protection measures issued in 2017. In all centres for social work, in relation to the total number of perpetrators of DV, and in order to protect the victims/survivors of DV, a total of 620 temporary measures were proposed to the Basic Courts, and 519 of those requests were granted. The largest volume of proposed versus granted protective measures throughout 2017, were from centres for social work from Skopje (104/101), Ohrid (107/89) and Prilep (59/48).²⁰⁶

The centres for social work mostly proposed the first three measures of prohibition, which are the prohibition to threaten, to disturb or mistreat the victim/survivor, and to approach them at a certain distance.²⁰⁷

¹⁹⁸ A. Berisha, N. Farnsworth, and D. Hoti, From Words to Actions? Monitoring the Institutional Response to Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovo, 2017, <http://www.womensnetwork.org/documents/20180312142859762.pdf>, (accessed 3 October 2018), p. 17.

¹⁹⁹ OSCE Mission in Kosovo, A Men's Perspective on Gender Equality in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovo, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo/382507?download=true>, (accessed 26 September 2018).

²⁰⁰ A. Qosaj-Mustafa and D. Morina, Compensation to Victims of Crime: Response to Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Cases in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, 2018, http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Final_English_Version_141863.pdf, (accessed 25 September 2018), p. 16.

²⁰¹ A. Berisha, N. Farnsworth, and D. Hoti, From Words to Actions? Monitoring the Institutional Response to Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovo, 2017, p. 18

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ A. Kasapolli-Selani, 'Duha në Familje Mposht Drejtësinë', Radio Free Europe, 8 August 2018, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/dhuna-ne-familje-mposht-drejtisine-/29420298.html>, (accessed 3 October 2018).

²⁰⁴ E. Димушевска and C. Шкријел, Мапирање на Достапните Услуги За Жени Жртви на Насилство во Република Македонија, Skopje, Macedonia, 2016, http://www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Mapiran-e-na-servisi_final.pdf, (accessed 3 October 2018), p. 48.

²⁰⁵ N. Chalovska-Dimovska, Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Law on Prevention, Combating and Protection from Domestic Violence, National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – Voice against Violence, Skopje, Macedonia, 2016, http://www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Monitoring-of-the-Law-for-DV_final-eng.pdf (3 October 2018), p. 44.

²⁰⁶ Анализа на Податоците Добиели Преку Обработка на Бнесените Податоци од Кварталните Тебели за Семејно Насилство, Завод за Социјални дејности, 2017, <http://zsd.gov.mk/семејното-насилство-во-македонија-во-20>, (accessed 3 October 2018).

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

MONTENEGRO

In 2016, misdemeanour courts received a total of 2 073 cases related to DV, out of which 1 226 cases were from the Misdemeanour Court in Podgorica, 420 were from the Misdemeanour Court in Budva and 427 cases from the Misdemeanour Court in Bijelo Polje. A total of 1 573 cases (75.88%) were completed. These cases were completed in the following way: financial penalties in 489 cases, prison sentences in 107 cases, conditional convictions in 177 cases, an issued warning in 94 cases, educational measures for 9 cases, in 489 cases an acquittal was issued, whereas 71 cases were resolved in another way. Of this same total, 33 requests from the court were rejected, and 104 of the cases were stopped throughout the duration of the trial.²⁰⁸ In addition, 252 protective measures were imposed in total, including 31 removals from the living space, 45 protection orders, prohibition of harassment and admission in 117 cases, and obligatory treatment for 23 cases of lived experience in substance use.²⁰⁹

Misdemeanour courts in Montenegro received a total of 1 790 GBV-related cases in 2017: 1 001 from the Misdemeanour Court in Podgorica, 422 from the Misdemeanour Court in Budva, and 347 cases from the Minor Offense Court in Bijelo Polje.²¹⁰ In total, 1 366 cases (or 76,31% of the total) reached a verdict: 727 in the Misdemeanour Court in Podgorica, 355 in the Misdemeanour Court in Budva, and 284 cases in Bijelo Polje. The following verdicts were reached: 443 new sentences, imprisonment in 103 of the cases and 179 court convictions. Security measures were enacted in eight cases, five cases were rejected, 428 cases were granted acquittal, while 52 cases were resolved in a different way, and 47 cases were stopped part-way. In addition, a total of 302 protective measures were imposed, namely through removal from the home in 31 cases, 65 restraining orders, 149 protections against borne harassment and retaliation, conditionally psychiatric treatment and treatment of addiction in 55 cases, one mandatory psychosocial treatment, and one dismissal of the case.²¹¹

SERBIA

The Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence introduced urgent protection measures, the obligation to report violence, the assessment of security risks, special training for relevant professionals/institutions, mandatory coordination and cooperation between services/institutions, the establishment of a unified central electronic database on DV, as well as penal provisions in cases of non-application or obstruction of application of the law.²¹² The law focuses heavily on prevention and mitigation measures. Additional protection is available through the police issuance of temporary or emergency restraining orders and orders for the perpetrators to distance themselves from the family home, although these measures still require prosecutors to request and courts to approve extensions beyond the initial 48 hours.²¹³

The Law also introduced emergency barring orders by the police, because apart from acting when violence occurs, the competent police officer is required to assess the risk of immediate danger of DV. This would mean that every case must be assessed by the police officer and, on the basis of all circumstances of the case, appropriate emergency measures must be granted.²¹⁴

Nebojša Stefanović, Serbia's Minister of Internal Affairs informed the public about the sanctioned DV cases at a press conference held on July 18th, 2018. Throughout the country, between June 2017 and June 2018, Serbian police officers imposed 28 036 protective measures, out of which 8 751 were temporary removal from the household, 19 275 were temporary restraining orders, and 15 373 were extensions to existing restraining orders.²¹⁵

Under the Law, the courts issued prohibitions of further harassment in 743 cases, 319 prohibitions of access to the space around the place of residence or place of work of the survivor, 521 cases of issued prohibitions of being within a certain distance, 13 orders for removal from the home regardless of the property right, and 81 eviction orders to a residential apartment or house regardless of the property right.²¹⁶

²⁰⁸ Ministarstvo za Ljudska i Manjinska Prava, Podaci o Slučajevima Nasilja nad Ženama i Nasilja u Porodici iz Različitih Izvora za 2017. Godinu, Podgorica, Montenegro, 2018.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² T. Ignjatović, The New Law is Here, What are the Effects, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2017, <https://rs.boell.org/en/2017/09/22/new-law-here-what-are-effects>, (accessed 3 October 2018).

²¹³ The Advocates for Human Rights and Autonomous Women's Centre, Implementation of Serbia's Domestic Violence Legislation: A Human Rights Report, 2017, https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/serbia_report_final.pdf, (accessed 3 October 2018), p. 33.

²¹⁴ B. Pavlović, 'Nova Ovlašćenja Policije u Slučaju Nasilja u Porodici', Strukovno Udruženje Policije, <http://www.sup.rs/aktivnosti/novosti/nova-ovlasćenja-policije/>, (accessed 3 October 2018).

²¹⁵ Ministry of Justice, Za Godinu 44 728 Prijavljenih Slučajeva Nasilja u Porodici, Government of Serbia, <https://iskljucinasilje.rs/rs/aktuelnosti/zagodinu-44-728-prijavljenih-slucajeva-nasilja-u-porodici/>, (accessed 26 September 2018).

²¹⁶ Ibid.

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WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Women human rights' defenders (WHRDs) are faced with different barriers that prevent them from effectively working on women's rights issues, limiting their space to operate. This phenomenon is known as shrinking civic space and although it is not limited to areas affected by conflict, it is a concern for the Western Balkan countries, where civic space is continuously under the attack of both state and non-state actors.

Some notable factors that contribute to this ongoing social issue are often accredited to governments' fears of political changes or shifts, increasing nationalism including hostility towards

foreign funding, and increasingly conservative ideals. The actual implications of shrinking space are restrictions on rights to assembly, restrictions to work and travel, limiting the ability to receive international funding, attacks on WHRDs and CSOs in both civic and private space, intimidation and threats, as well as both censorship and self-censorship.²¹⁷ The threats and challenges that WHRD in the Western Balkans face in the public arena often leave them targeted for not behaving as they "should" and for challenging what lies at the core of nationalist values.²¹⁸

ATTACKS ON WHRD

WHRD continue to work in a hostile environment in all Western Balkan countries. Provided the regional post-war context and the issue of the lack of accountability for war crimes namely in BiH, Kosovo and Serbia, human rights organisations dealing with impunities of war crimes are still at-risk of attacks. These attacks are often left unpunished by state authorities. One of the direct results of the attacks on human rights activists dealing with war crimes is their silence. In Kosovo for example, many human rights defenders (HRDs) and WHRDs working within transitional justice and accountability for war crimes are being excluded from the media and public sphere.

The HRD and WHRD dealing with LGBTIQ rights are under constant attack in all Western Balkan countries. The forms of harassment range from anonymous and public threats, slander and smear campaigns, to suffered intimidation and violent attacks, threats to their life/livelihoods/bodily integrity, and threats made to their families. As in the previous editions of this report, such attacks are made by parliamentarians, media and right-wing organisations.

There are cases other than those listed below, where WHRDs from the women's rights organisations that Kvinna till Kvinna cooperates with are subjected to different kinds of threats and harassment, but where the situation is still being dealt with in different ways, and so to prevent the risk of further exposure and attacks, these cases are not included in the report.

ALBANIA

According to the Freedom House report for Albania for 2018, freedom of association and assembly are generally respected, demonstrations by opposition parties and civic groups are common, and they have been peaceful. CSOs function without restrictions but have limited funding and policy influence.²²⁰

This broad-spectrum analysis, however, does not encompass the fact that HRDs and WHRD are subjected to negative representation and hate speech in the media, according to the monitoring conducted by editorial staff of My History, an LGBTIQ organisation supported by the Civil Rights Defenders. Approximately 21% of news, opinions, and analyses published in online media between November and December of 2016 contained discrimination and hate speech, a finding that was revealed in a pilot project to monitor reporting by online media in Albania.²²¹

Recent research indicates that such rates of hate speech and online attacks were similar in 2017. Over 200 articles were monitored on four online news media outlets (Featured Newspapers, Balkanweb, Panorama and Syri.net) based on clicks, the editorial line and an assessment of its impact on public opinion. The content of the articles, as well as multimedia elements, such as videos and photos, were also taken into consideration. According to the report in 43% of the observed cases, the hate speech and discrimination were addressed to specific groups, including LGBTIQ, Roma, ethnic minority groups or those with certain political beliefs. Monitors, however, noted that in many cases, individuals became the subject of these articles because of the social groups they represented. In 73% of cases, targets of discrimination and hate speech were women. Compared with that same monitoring that took place in 2015, this recent study indicated that there was a notable increase in attacks or hate speech directed at women. Gender was the main cause or motivation of discrimination and/or hate speech in 41% of cases, followed by topics based on ethnicity and/or race in 22%, political beliefs in 17%, and sexual orientation or gender identity in 11% of monitored items.²²²

²¹⁷ C. Wassholm, *Suffocating the Movement - Shrinking Space for Women's Rights*, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, Hemma, 2018, <https://kvinna.tillkvinna.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/kvinna-till-kvinna-suffocating-the-movement-report-eng-2018.pdf> (accessed 31 October 2018), p. 11.

²¹⁸ Ibid, p. 42.

²¹⁹ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, *Serbia 2018 Report*, Strasbourg, France, 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-serbia-report.pdf>, (accessed 23 October 2018).

²²⁰ Freedom House, *'Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis'*, Freedom House, 2018, https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2018_Final_SinglePage.pdf, (accessed 9 October 2018).

²²¹ I. Dervishi, 'Gjuha e Urrejties në Median Online Mbetet Shqetësues, Thotë Monitorimi', 27 January 2017, <https://www.reporter.al/gjuha-e-urrejtjes-ne-median-online-mbetet-shqetesuese-thote-monitorimi/>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

²²² Ibid.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The security risks of WHRD in BiH is recognised by the authorities, mainly among the CSOs working in the field of GBV prevention.

The Executive Director of the Foundation of Local Democracy for Development of Civil Society, Jasmina Mujezinović, announced that the foundation has implemented the project *Staying Safe - Security Network for Human Rights Defenders and Gender-Based Violence Activists in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, in partnership with the Network of Police Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²²³ According to Mujezinović, most of the threats to HRDs in BiH had a gendered connotation, most often because those affected were working within the context of women's rights, such as working with survivors of violence, women survivors of war, or testimonies against war crimes. In relation to their male counterparts, WHRD are exposed to specific threats, including, among other things, sexualised defamation campaigns, direct and indirect threats to family members, threats of sexual assault, and the receipt of explicit messages or images.²²⁴

The most recent verbal attack on human rights activist came at the hands of Radio Television Service of Republika Srpska. Bakira Hasečić, human rights activist and the president of the Association of Women Victims of War was exposed to a verbal attack by the journalist of the abovementioned prominent TV station. The Communications Regulatory Agency condemned these attacks, and criminal complaints were filed against both the Radio Television Service and the journalist who had placed a number of serious and accusatory statements about Hasečić.²²⁵

KOSOVO

On May 13, 2018, unknown assailants beat former Zeri editor in chief and noted human rights advocate Arbana Xharra. She had been threatened many times for her reporting and personal stance expressed in social media about religious extremism and terrorism. On April 10, Xharra had told police that unknown persons spray-painted red crosses on her front door. Xharra informed the media that religious radicals and activists of opposition parties had attacked her on social media throughout the year. An investigation was under way at the time of writing this report.²²⁶

MACEDONIA

Hate speech was present during the electoral campaigns of 2016 and 2017 and incidents continued even after the political campaigns. Hate speech was coupled with organised media attacks and smear campaigns on CSOs among which were also women's CSOs. The organisations were depicted as working against state interests and for foreign agendas with foreign finance, and were labelled as "mercenaries" and "Sorosoids".²²⁷ These campaigns, however, were culminated under the former government, and with a new change in government in 2017, the general situation for WHRD is slowly improving.

According to the hate speech registration platform, run by the foundation Metamorphosis, 92 incidents of hate speech directed towards sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression were reported since its establishment in February 2014.²²⁸ In 2017, MARGINS, a coalition of CSOs in Macedonia, documented 22 cases of both physical and verbal violence against LGBTQI persons, including mainly trans* sex workers.²²⁹

Similar to other countries in the Western Balkans, one of the common attacks on LGBTQI communities come in the shape of pseudo-scientific texts representing homosexuality as sexual deviation and perversion. One such example is an article published in the Republika weekly magazine on July 25th 2017²³⁰ in which homosexuality was represented as a plague directed against traditional family values. Moreover, the author of the article emphasised a negative influence same-sex couples might have on children and those children's prospective sexual orientations. Coalition MARGINS filed a criminal complaint against the authors of these texts, on the grounds of discrimination and hate speech.²³¹

MONTENEGRO

In Montenegro, attacks on HRDs mainly encompass anti-LGBTQI rhetoric, such as linking the LGBTQI community to child abuse; articles in several web portals associated the LGBTQI rights movement with paedophilia, implying that members of the community are guiding children towards early sexual activities. The CSO LGBT Forum Progress strongly condemned such attacks, stating that they are not only false, but also extremely harmful for LGBTQI communities and society in general. LGBT Forum Progress also filed a complaint against one of the main Orthodox Church Bishops in Montenegro, Amfilohije Radović, for such statements given in the media, where he too equated homosexuality with paedophilia.²³²

²²³ J. Mujezinović, 'Braniteljice Ljudskih Prava u BiH Izložene Povećanim Rizicima', Vijesti, 10 June 2018, <https://vijesti.ba/clanak/409399/braniteljice-ljudskih-prava-u-bih-izlozene-povecanim-rizicima>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ "RTRS" Kažnjen Zbog Priloga o Bakiri Hasečić, Haber.ba, 12 February 2018, <https://www.haber.ba/vijesti/bih/584178-rtrs-kaznjen-zbog-priloga-o-bakiri-hasecic>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

²²⁶ United States Department of State, 'Kosovo', Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277425.pdf>, (accessed 24 September 2018), p. 3.

²²⁷ Љ. Златев, 'Република: Сорос за две години потрошил 6 милиони евра во Македонија', Sitel, <https://sitel.com.mk/republika-soros-za-dve-godini-potroshil-6-milioni-evra-vo-makedonija> (accessed 20 October 2018).

²²⁸ Б. Гинова, Извештај на спроведувањето на ПрепоракатаСМ/Рес (2010)5 од Комитетот на Министри до земјите-членки во однос на мерките за борба противдискриминација врз основа на сексуална ориентација или родов-идентитет во Република Македонија, Хелсиншкикомитет за човекови права на Република Македонија –ЛГБТИ Центар за поддршка, 2018, <http://lgbti.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/>, (accessed 12 October 2018), p. 7.

²²⁹ Ibid, p. 8

²³⁰ Б. Зафорова, 'Се уништува семејството, се наметнува перверзија и нигилизам', Republika Online, 25 July 2018, <https://republika.mk/802233>, (accessed 9 October 2018).

²³¹ Д. Дрндаревска, Сексуални и Здравствени Права на Маргинализираните Заедници, Coalition MARGINS, Skopje, Macedonia, 2018, http://coalition.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/kszpmz_gi_2017_final.pdf, (accessed 9 October 2018).

²³² 'Predat Prijave Povodom Izjava Amfilohija Radovića i Teksta "Hey Lolita"', LGBT Forum Progres, 2018, <http://lgbtprogres.me/2018/08/predat-prijave-povodom-izjava-amfilohija-radovica-i-teksta-hej-lolita/>, (accessed 10 October 2018).

SERBIA

There were several verbal attacks and threats directed at WHRD in Serbia, among others from the same right-wing and pro-government tabloids as mentioned in previous editions of the Women's Rights in the Western Balkans reports. Members of the media and CSOs, including well-known WHRD Nataša Kandić, was recently subjected to a wave of hate speech from MPs and right-wing extremists in Serbia. These attacks were a response to the announcement that Kandić had been nominated to the Nobel Peace Prize by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2018. Among other things, the far-right politician, convicted of war crimes, Vojislav Šešelj, wrote in a statement containing several vulgarities that Kandić should instead be nominated to be "impaled on a stick".²³³ In response to the Nobel Peace Prize nomination, the pro-Russian far-right organisation Zavetnici held an unannounced protest in front of the Human Rights House office in Belgrade, which is an organisation that has no association with Kandić, nor the Humanitarian Law Centre that Kandić established. A group of 30 people gathered to put up posters with a photo of Kandić along with the text "Nobel Prize for betrayal of the Serbian people" on the windows of the office. Human Rights House employees reported that the police failed to respond to their calls, and added that this incident highlighted the lack of response by public officials when it comes to attacks on HRDs. The lead prosecutor stated that the posters did not violate Article 9 of the Law on Public Order and Peace, which includes that insults, acts of violence and threats should be followed by punishment. Instead, the prosecutor stated that the posters were representing a political stance, and that they were not examples of hate speech.²³⁴ In addition, the prosecutor negated to identify these statements as slander that has potential to damage Kandić's reputation or put their safety at risk.

In February 2018, members of Zavetnici placed posters on the premises of several CSOs, including the entrance door of the WHRD CSO Women in Black. The posters read "Foreign agents - closed from March 4th" indicating that following the March 4th municipal elections, the office would be closed down, since Zavetnici were also running in the elections as a political party. The incident was reported and police came to the premises to investigate. At the request of the police, Women in Black delivered a video from a security camera showing two people who were placing the threatening messages on the office door. One month following the attack, the WHRD CSO requested an update from the police regarding the actions that were undertaken in finding the perpetrators. Women in Black received a general answer that indicated that an investigation was ongoing, but no further information was received from the police.²³⁵

Further, members of both the Serbian Radical Party and Zavetnici attempted to interrupt the festival Mirëdita/Dobar Dan in 2018. The goal of the festival is to exchange artistic ideas and to create space for cooperation between artists from Kosovo and Serbia, organised by Youth Initiative for Human Rights and Centre for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade. Participants and activists were subjected to verbal attacks and hate speech. There were also many police officers engaged in protecting the participants and the organisers.²³⁶

²³³ 'Serbia: Hate Speech Against Nataša Kandić Must Be Investigated', Civil Rights Defenders, 14 February 2018, <http://old.civilrightsdefenders.org/news/serbia-hate-speech-against-natasa-kandic-must-be-investigated/>, (accessed 10 October 2018).

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ M. Medenica, Repression against Human Rights Defenders, January 2018 - April 2018, Dossier no.11, Women in Black, 2018, <http://zencrnom.org/images/pdf/dosije/dosije11-napadi-na-zuc-januar-april2018-eng.pdf>, (accessed 30 October 2018).

²³⁶ M. Mutić, 'Festival "Mirëdita, Dobar Dan!" will be Held Despite Threats', Youth Initiative for Human Rights, 24 May 2018, <http://www.yihr.rs/en/festival-miredita-dobar-dan-will-be-held-despite-threats/>, (accessed 10 October 2018).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THE RECOGNITION OF THE WOMEN CSOS BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

All six countries in the Western Balkans have different forms of institutionalised cooperation between governing institutions and CSOs. Improved environment for civil society is one of the requirements in the EU accession process. Women's rights organisations are working hard; both to hold institutions accountable to their commitments, but also to support them in carrying out state responsibilities, for example through service provision and tailored trainings. The recognition of women's rights organisations by the international community and not least EU institutions is steadily increasing, whereas at the level of the national governments' recognition is depending more on personal relations established, rather than institutionalised recognition of genuine CSOs, WHRDs and their work. Also, women's rights organisations

are more often recognised for their service provision, than for their other kinds of expertise. In a recent evaluation by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, partner organisations (women's rights organisations) themselves recognise the development of their skills and approaches with authorities, and specifically mention contributions to legislative and policy development. This growth in collaborative skill is noted also by national representatives, interviewed for the evaluation, to a certain extent. Ministries and gender focal points note that women's rights organisations are developing their knowledge and skills in collaboration, both in the content and the approach of consultations, and that partners provide solid evidence in their approaches.²³⁷ Below are practice examples of cooperation, and in extension of that, of recognition.

ALBANIA

The dominant working area for women's CSOs is GBV, DV, and anti-trafficking. Their work is recognised and acknowledged by the authorities. These CSOs play a key role in offering support and protection to women victims/survivors of GBV and therefore the specific expertise developed over the years is heavily relied upon by the authorities. They have spearheaded the establishment of the first referral mechanisms at the level of municipalities and are often one of the cornerstones of any functioning coordinated community response. Awareness campaigns largely owe their success to CSOs' initiatives and involvement.²³⁸

One example of a well-established CSO is the Psycho-social Centre VATRA, that has been involved in the delivery of programmes of the Albanian government regarding anti-trafficking and combatting DV. The Centre has been involved as a partner in the drafting and implementation of the objectives and measures taken in the National Antitrafficking Strategies from 2002 and onwards, and has participated in consultation meetings organised by the Office of the National Antitrafficking Coordinator on drafting the National Antitrafficking Strategy/Action Plan 2014-2017, and it is a member and signatory of the National Referral Mechanism Agreement.²³⁹ VATRA is a member of the Albanian Women Empowerment Network; a network gathering ten women's rights organisations, for stronger joint advocacy of women's rights issues.

Some encouraging steps towards better cooperation between LGBTIQ organisations and the Albanian authorities have been made, mainly on the local level. Following the preparation of a new guideline on "Hate Crime Policing against LGBTI Persons: Training for a Professional Police Response," over 150 police officers from all over Albania have been trained during a two-month period to identify and address hate crimes against LGBTIQ persons. LGBTIQ CSOs and communities, together with police and justice institutions were involved in the consultations during this process.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ J. Newkirk, A. Lidstrom and A. Popovicki Capin, Mid-term Review and Evaluation of The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation's Western Balkan Regional EU Advocacy Programme, Conflict Management Consulting, 2017.

²³⁸ Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Baseline Evaluation Report: Albania, Strasbourg, France, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>, (accessed 5 October 2018).

²³⁹ Qendra Psiko-Sociale 'Vatra', <http://www.qendravatra.org.al/>, (accessed 17 October 2018).

²⁴⁰ Regional Conference "Greasing the Wheels of the Criminal Justice System", Historia Ime, <http://historia-ime.com/2018/05/18/regional-conference-greasing-the-wheels-of-the-criminal-justice-system/>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

„[Women] were not allowed to participate in the peace process, **there are no women in the accession negotiations, and they are not in working groups for constitutional reform, so we have launched the Initiative.**“ Says Jadranka Miličević from the CURE Foundation, referring to the “Women Citizens for Constitutional Reform”, an initiative that advocates for the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure better protection of human rights and freedoms, especially focusing on a gender perspective. The initiative was formed by the activists and organisations from all over BiH who wishes to encourage all citizens to use their knowledge, energy and willingness on mutual action and contribute towards the fulfilment of these goals.²⁴¹

In November 2017, the Agreement of Cooperation between the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and CSOs, was signed.²⁴² The rules for drafting legal regulations related to the cooperation and consultation with CSOs exist for several years now, however, they are not being adequately implemented. Only a small number of ministries at the state-level conduct a consistent process of public consultation. In January 2017, a new Rulebook on Conducting of the Rules for Consultations in Drafting of the Legal Regulations in the Ministry of Justice of BiH was adopted, on which the ministry held consultations with representatives of civil society at the end of April 2016. A novelty in the region was the establishment of an official online platform called eKonsultacije, for CSOs to have better access to participating in policy-making, allowing individuals and CSOs to access information on the legislative processes via the internet. All draft laws must be posted on the e-consultation platform, and any interested member of the public can provide input on these drafts. The platform is currently active, although it is not yet fully functional.²⁴³

KOSOVO

The major network of women's CSOs in Kosovo is the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), with 127 member organisations across the country. The Network is engaged in many areas, such as women in politics and decision-making, women's health, GBV and women's economic empowerment, to name a few. Thanks to persistent and evidence-based advocacy initiatives, KWN slowly gained more access to institutions; now institutions regularly include KWN in drafting key legislation affecting women. As an example of their recognition, KWN together with the Kosovo Lobby for Gender Equality organised a meeting with women politicians, Members of Parliament, Municipal Assemblies and gender equality officers in June of 2018. The meeting created a space for strategizing how to strengthen the impact of women in politics and decision-making in Kosovo.²⁴⁴ Meetings such as these indicate that government officials are recognising women's CSOs as experts in their fields, and that they play a crucial part in decision-making processes, social change, and development.

There are still obstacles however, and CSOs in Kosovo were for example excluded from (and even unaware of) the process of drafting the National Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence (NSPDV) 2016-2020, which is one of the major steps in combatting domestic violence in Kosovo. According to the NSPDV, there are several activities that should be implemented by CSOs as well as provided for them, such as “continuous training and certification of [CSOs'] employees focused on DV, on well-defined themes and approved modules”. CSO representatives stated that they have attended training on DV, but not as part of the implementation of the NSPDV.²⁴⁵

Kosovo Commission on Victim Compensation is a state institution in charge of the victims of violent compensable crimes, including victims of domestic violence.²⁴⁶ In order to have a victim centred approach, this Commission appoints members with experience in working with vulnerable groups including victims/survivors of DV. In the report published by the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, the selection of the civil society member did not go through a network that is known and reputable in working with and advocating on the rights of victims/survivors of GBV.²⁴⁷

MACEDONIA

The Gender Equality Platform in Macedonia is an initiative by 21 CSOs that identified the need to act jointly in order to promote gender equality in economy, education, reproductive rights and health, access to services after survived violence, social policy, participation of women in politics and combatting GBV. The platform was created in response to the patriarchal values, the gap in the distribution of social goods and power, marginalized social, economic and political status and position of women in the country.²⁴⁸ The Platform has become sought after by the new government, invited to participate in various working groups, to support the drafting of new legislation and more.

There are also steps towards cooperation between the government and CSOs dealing with LGBTIQ rights. An Interparty Parliamentary Group was formed in April 2018 between three CSOs and 13 Members of Parliament from different political parties. At the time of writing this report, the group was in the process of creating and adopting an action plan for LGBTIQ advocacy in the Parliament.²⁴⁹ A milestone event for Macedonian society was the Pride Weekend in June 2017. It was officially opened by the Minister of Culture, Robert Alagjovski, who in his opening speech, expressed support for not only the events taking place that weekend, but also for the LGBTIQ community as such. Members of the LGBTIQ community consider the Minister's greetings speech a historical moment, as it was the first time that a government official attended an event in Macedonia related to LGBTIQ rights.²⁵⁰

²⁴¹ ‘Women's Network BiH Strategic Planning Workshop’, Women Citizens for Constitutional Reform, 2018, <https://womenscitizensforconstitutionalreform.wordpress.com/>, (accessed 23 October 2018).

²⁴² Ministarstvo Pravde Bosne i Hercegovine, Sporazum o Saradnji Između Vijeća Ministara Bosne i Hercegovine i Nevladinih Organizacija u Bosni i Hercegovini, 2017, <http://www.mpr.gov.ba/NVO/default.aspx?id=7076&langTag=bs-BA>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

²⁴³ D. Pandurević and R. Ibrahimagić (eds.), Izvještaj o Ispunjenju Decembarskih Zahtjeva 2014-2018, Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar u ime Inicijative za Monitoring Evropskih Integracija Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018, <http://eu-monitoring.ba/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HRP-dec.zahtjevi-01.10.2018.-WEB-2.pdf>, (accessed 5 October 2018).

²⁴⁴ Kosovo Women's Network [KWN], Women in Politics Strategize to Strengthen Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-making in Kosovo (Press Release), 2018, <http://www.womensnetwork.org/documents/20180613173522990.pdf>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

²⁴⁵ A. Berisha, N. Farnsworth, and D. Hoti, From Words to Actions? Monitoring the Institutional Response to Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovo, 2017, <http://www.womensnetwork.org/documents/20180312142859762.pdf>, (accessed 3 October 2018), p. 29.

²⁴⁶ Republic of Kosovo, Justice, Dignity and Respect for Victims of Crime, Pristina, Kosovo, <https://md.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/D42B1893-B42D-4BF4-B6D7-B1675BD7BAEB.pdf>, (accessed 30 October 2018).

²⁴⁷ A. Qosaj-Mustafa, and D. Morina, Compensation to Victims of Crime: Response to Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Cases in Kosovo, Pristina, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, 2018, http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Final_English_Version_141863.pdf, (accessed 25 September 2018), p. 21.

²⁴⁸ ‘Creation of the Gender Equality Platform’, REACTOR, <http://reactor.org.mk/NewsDetails.aspx?id=20&newsID=185&lang=en-US>, (accessed 23 October 2018).

²⁴⁹ Б. Гинова, Извештај на спроведувањето на Препораката CM/Rec (2010)5 од Комитетот на Министри до земјите- членки во однос на мерките за борба против дискриминација врз основа на сексуална ориентација или родов идентитет во Република Македонија, Хелсиншки комитет за човекови права на Република Македонија – ЛГБТИ Центар за поддршка, 2018, <http://lgbti.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/>, (accessed 12 October 2018), p. 7.

²⁵⁰ Д. Дрндаревска, Сексуални и Здравствени Права на Маргинализираните Заедници, Coalition MARGINS, Skopje, Macedonia, 2018, http://coalition.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/kszpmz_gi_2017_final.pdf, (accessed 9 October 2018), p. 139.

MONTENEGRO

The participation of CSOs in the process of creating and implementing public policies in Montenegro is regulated by a decree on the procedure for achieving cooperation between state administration bodies and CSOs and a decree on the procedure for conducting a public hearing in the process of law drafting. The Office for Cooperation with NGOs in the General Secretariat of the Government publishes annual reports on the application of these regulations. In the application of the decree regarding the procedure of conducting public hearings, the key problems are the failure to publish the list of laws on which public hearings will be conducted, the non-implementation of the consultation phase of public hearings, and the unsatisfactory practice regarding the compilation and publication of reports on the conducted public discussions.²⁵¹

As a concrete example of state-CSO cooperation, the initiative of Women's Rights Centre and SOS Hotline Nikšić can be mentioned, where the two CSOs met with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Police Department regarding the importance of coordination on cases of GBV and DV. As a result of the meeting, Minister of internal affairs Mevludin Nuhodžić announced that in the forthcoming period an Operational team will be formed which, in addition to the police officers, will include representatives of the civil sector and other competent institutions. Through consideration of current practice and analysis of specific cases, the team will work on determining further guidelines for the improvement of work and results in the field of prevention and combatting family violence.²⁵²

SERBIA

The participation of CSOs in the process of creating and implementing public policies in Montenegro is regulated by a The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, in its annual report for 2017, stated that it organised seven sectoral meetings attended by decision-makers consisting of representatives from ministries and representatives from CSOs. Of these seven meetings held in 2017, two were related to issues of discrimination. It was not possible to conclude from the report whether, and to what extent, representatives of women's CSOs were involved in these meetings.²⁵³

The National Strategy for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2015-2019, between the government and the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, foresees several areas for which this cooperation is significant. These are social and economic development, non-formal education and integration into the EU. In the social and economic development sector, there is a concern expressed regarding standards for providing social care services. The assumption is that CSOs, especially those working in smaller communities, will have problems with a lack of capacity in both human and material resources.²⁵⁴

According to the Action Plan for the Strategy, the foreseen measures for the improvement of cooperation include the creation of plans for cooperation, organisation of round tables and meetings on the topic of volunteer activities, as well as changes and amendments to the law. The only measure proposed for the capacity-building of CSOs is their licencing to work with vulnerable groups.²⁵⁵

In Serbia, the prEUgovor Coalition was initiated by seven CSOs, including several women's CSOs, in 2013 to oversee the implementation of policies in the field of judiciary and fundamental rights (Chapter 23 of the EU Acquis Communautaire) and Justice, freedom and security (Chapter 24) and propose measures to improve the reforms, using the process of EU integration to achieve substantial progress in the further democratization of Serbia. Coalition prEUgovor was formed from the need for the synergy of potential and knowledge of these CSOs in order to achieve faster, more efficient and successful implementation of EU values and standards in Serbia. PrEUgovor publishes biannual progress reports on Chapters 23 and 24 in Serbia that are widely distributed and recognised.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ Ministarstvo Javne Uprave, Strategija Unapređenja Podsticajnog Okruženja Za Djelovanje Nevladinih Organizacija 2018-2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2017.

²⁵² 'Ministry of Internal Affairs – PD Forming a Team to Combat Family Violence', Women's Rights Centre, <http://womensrightscenter.org/en/saop%C5%A1tenja/mup-up-formira-tim-za-borbu-protiv-porodi%C4%8Dnog-nasilja/>, (accessed 20 October 2018).

²⁵³ Kancelarija za Saradnju sa Civilnim Društvom, *Godišnji Izveštaj o Radu*, 2017, <http://civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/upload/documents/Izvestaji/Izve%C5%A1taj%20o%20radu%20Kancelarije%20za%202017.%20godinu.pdf>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

²⁵⁴ Kancelarija za Saradnju sa Civilnim Društvom, 8. Uloga Organizacija Civilnog Društva u Socio-ekonomskom Razvoju, <http://strategija.civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/diskusija/nacionalna-strategija-za-stvaranje-podsticajnog-okruzenja-za-razvoj-civilnog-drustva-u-republici-srbiji-za-period-od-2015-2019-godine/uloga-organizacija-civilnog-drustva-u-socio-ekonomskom-razvoju/>, (accessed 12 October 2018).

²⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁵⁶ 'About PrEUgovor', PrEUgovor, <http://preugovor.org/en/Home>, (accessed 23 October 2018).

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