

A photograph of two women standing outdoors at what appears to be a protest or public demonstration. The woman on the left has short dark hair, wears glasses, a red coat, and a black bag. The woman on the right has blonde hair and wears a blue scarf and a red coat. They are both smiling and holding a large purple sign with white and black text. The background is a blurred city street with other people and buildings.

THE KVINNA TILL KVINNA FOUNDATION

FRIENDS OR FOES?

GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE 2022 EUROPEAN
COMMISSION COUNTRY REPORTS FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS

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KVINNA TILL KVINNA

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation has defended women's rights since 1993. For every woman's right to be safe and to be heard. Today we are one of the world's leading women's rights organisations, working directly in areas affected by war and conflict to strengthen women's influence and power. We work closely together with more than 100 local partner organisations across 20 countries to end violence against women, reach lasting peace and close the gender gap once and for all.

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Acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CLIP	Country Level Implementation Plan (of GAP III)
CSO	Civil society organisation
DG NEAR	Directorate for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUO	European Union Office (Kosovo)
GAP II	Joint Staff working Document Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020
GAP III	Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Gender Action Plan III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2026
GBV	Gender-based violence
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
IDP	Internally displaced person
ILO	International Labour Organisation
Istanbul Convention	Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex
NAP	National Action Plan
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Glossary

The report uses the following definitions based on article 3 of the Istanbul Convention:

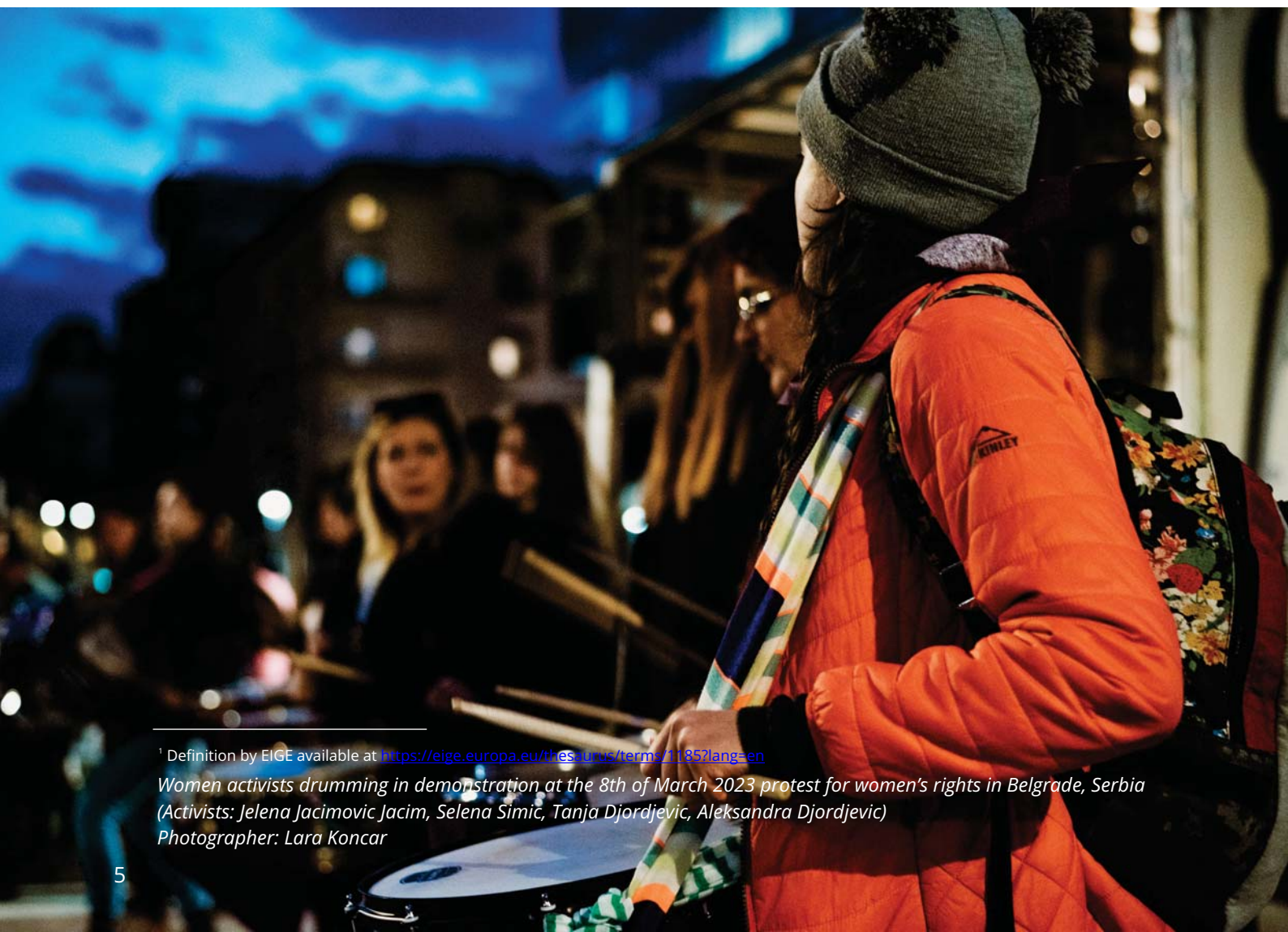
Violence against women: is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Domestic violence: shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

Gender: refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.

Gender-based violence against women: shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately.

Gender-mainstreaming¹: the systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men in all policies and actions.



¹ Definition by EIGE available at <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1185?lang=en>

*Women activists drumming in demonstration at the 8th of March 2023 protest for women's rights in Belgrade, Serbia (Activists: Jelena Jacimovic Jacim, Selena Simić, Tanja Djordjevic, Aleksandra Djordjevic)
Photographer: Lara Koncar*

Executive summary and recommendations

Number of references to gender, women/girls, men/boys and gender-specific recommendations in 2022 Country Reports

	Gender	Women/girls	Men/boys	Recommendations
Albania	34	38	7	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	18	36	5	1
Kosovo	38	61	4	3
Montenegro	35	44	6	6
North Macedonia	37	36	7	1
Serbia	26	35	4	2

Overall, gender mainstreaming of 2022 EU Country Reports for the Western Balkans improved. The number of official recommendations attending to gender equality issues increased and attention to the situation of women and girls is no longer limited to Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security) and 19 (Social Policy and Employment). References to women and girls are increasingly integrated into other chapters including 26 (Education and Culture), 28 (Consumer and Health Protection) and 16 (Statistics). While this is certainly a positive sign, much remains to be done to harmonise gender-mainstreaming across the Country Reports, increase the number of chapters effectively mainstreamed and improve the quality of the analysis.

The EU accession policy is a key window of opportunity to promote the adoption of gender equality legislation in line with the EU *acquis* and gender-sensitive reforms across Western Balkan countries but it has not been fully utilised yet. Respect for the rule of law, human rights, and protection of minorities goes hand in hand with gender equality principle and standards. On the road to accession, the EU has the strongest political and economic leverage vis-à-vis Balkan countries and should make the most of it. This calls for clear guidance from the EU to the national governments about what reforms to prioritise, how to gender mainstream policies, strategies and legislation in line with the EU *acquis* and, crucially, how to move from policy to effective implementation. For this reason, the issuing of official, specific and action-oriented recommendations to national governments attaining to gender equality in different chapters of the reports is of the utmost importance.

This year, the **Kosovo and Montenegro Reports lead the way with thorough integration of a gender perspective in many chapters, Albania and Serbia Reports show considerable progress in the integration of gender issues, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Report slightly improved while the North Macedonia Report stayed the same.** Overall, Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) continue to draw most attention to the situation of women and girls, often featuring official recommendations related to gender equality (see Annex 1). Increasingly, other chapters such as Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security), 28 (Consumer and Health Protection), and 26 (Education and Culture) include some references to gender / women / girls.

In relation to the number of official recommendations, the Montenegro Report ranked first this year with six official recommendations (in the grey boxes) related to the Parliament's capacity to oversee gender equality issues, access to justice and protection from discrimination, protection from gender-based violence, adoption of targeted employment measures for women and other groups, increase in investment and research programmes also involving women. The Kosovo Report followed suit with three recommendations on strengthening the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, adopting the Law on Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women and continuing efforts to address GBV, implementing the Strategy and Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings and adopting the new Labour Law in line with the EU acquis. The Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia Reports follow with two official recommendations each and Bosnia and Herzegovina Report ranks last with one official recommendation on maternity leave benefits.

The EU's position and recommendations on democratic backsliding, media control, restriction of civic space, attacks on human rights defenders (HRDs) and failure to address the legacies of the conflicts should be further strengthened. In particular, democratic backsliding in Serbia continued unabated this year in a political climate fraught with tensions and polarization, control of media space, attacks on civil society, HRDs and journalists, violent repression of protests, glorification of convicted war criminals and lack of independence of the judiciary, among others. However, the Country Report only uses the word "backsliding" in Chapter 31 (Foreign and Security Policy) due to the country's failure to align with the EU sanctions regime against the Russia Federation. The EU should openly acknowledge Serbia's regression on the 'fundamentals' and issue specific recommendations to pressure the government to uphold human rights, women's rights, rights of LGBTQI and minorities, freedom of expression, assembly and association.

The sections on domestic violence and violence against women generally improved. However, common guidelines on reporting gender-based violence are clearly missing and only a few reports include different forms of gender-based violence and sex-disaggregated data. The Kosovo and Montenegro Reports provide the most exhaustive accounts of these phenomena. Both tackle the issues at length, use clear terminology, include data and issue official recommendations, which resonate with the assessment that gender-based violence continues to be a key concern in these countries as a criminal, societal and public health issue. The Montenegro Report analyses the root causes of gender-based violence, citing patriarchal norms, stereotypes and deep-rooted discrimination that degrade and discriminate against women, leading to gender-based violence. As per the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, it also tackles other forms of violence such as conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking, body-shaming, sexual harassment in the workplace, early and forced marriages, cyber stalking, psychological violence, smear campaigns and hate speech against women in public/political life. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Report is among the weakest this year with no data and limited analysis of the situation in the country in relation to different forms of gender-based violence.

None of the reports include a gender perspective in the analysis of the legacies of the 1990s' armed conflicts despite the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence and women's contributions to peacebuilding and reconciliation. The issue of victims/survivors of war-time sexual violence is addressed in the Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia Reports, although in different sections. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Report includes it in the section on fundamental rights while the others in the section on domestic handling of war crimes, indicating the lack of common guidelines in this respect. Also, women's participation in prevention, protection, peacebuilding, recovery and rehabilitation is entirely absent from the relevant chapters (Chapters 31 - Foreign, Security and Defence Policy, Good Neighbourly Relations and Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia) despite the EU's and Western Balkan countries' commitments to UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security (WPS). Through the Gender Action Plan III, the WPS agenda has become part of the EU acquis and alignment with it should be closely monitored. Also, given the prominent role of the EU in facilitating the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue for normalisation of relations between the two countries, these issues can no longer be ignored.

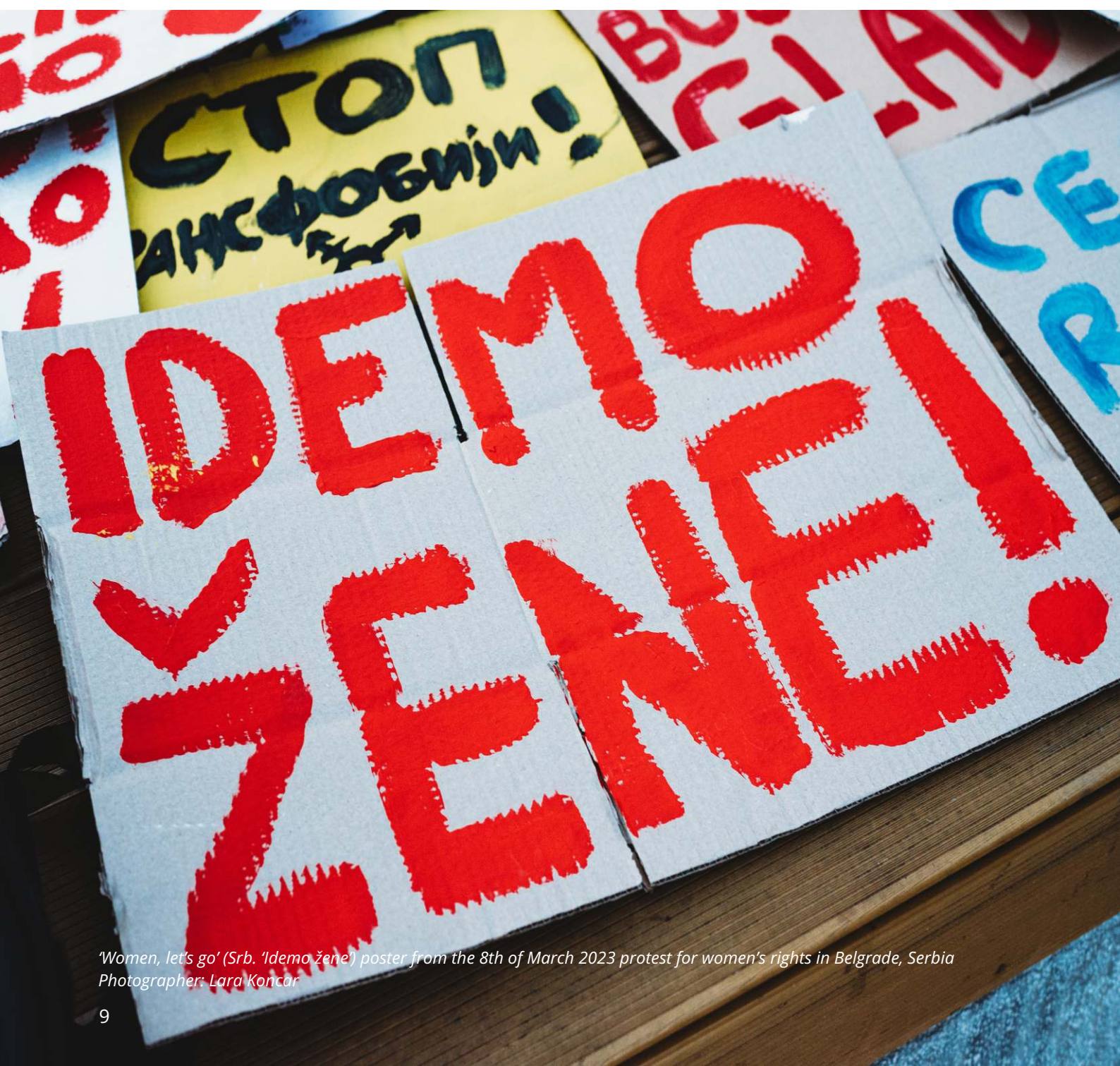
An intersectional approach is being progressively integrated in the Country Reports, with the exception of the North Macedonia report. More attention is paid to women belonging to minorities, women with different abilities, elderly women and women from rural areas in different chapters. For example, the Albania Report includes a specific recommendation in Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection) aimed at guaranteeing access to quality health care to vulnerable populations, including Roma and Egyptian women. The Kosovo Report includes a recommendation in Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) to address non-discrimination in employment, especially in relation to women and women from non-majority communities, older people, people with pre-existing mental health problems, among others and particularly women and girls belonging to these groups. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Report also increased attention to women belonging to vulnerable groups, including Roma women, in the fundamental rights section, highlighting their exposure to domestic violence, early marriages and trafficking.

Sex-disaggregated data and statistics are still generally lacking in many Country Reports. While this partially reflects the gaps in the data collection systems of the countries in question, the EU can use different sources in the absence of data collected by the state, including data and reports published by international independent expert bodies (such as GREVIO and CEDAW Committee), civil society organisations and the European Institute for Gender Equality. The country reports should also issue official recommendations in Chapter 18 (Statistics) aimed at improving the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data across sectors to the National Statistical Offices.

Based on this year's analysis we recommend the European Commission and EU Delegations/Office in the Western Balkans to:

- 1) Increase senior leadership support for and attention to gender equality as a vital component of the EU accession process and ensure regular training on gender mainstreaming, in accordance with GAP III, to staff in DG NEAR and EU Delegations/Office**
- 2) Update the guidelines to include gender-specific questions across an increased number of chapters in the Country Reports with prompts and minimum requirements to be revised by the Gender Focal Point during the horizontal reading**
- 3) Increase the number of official recommendations attending to gender equality issues across different chapters of the Reports and ensure they are clear, practical and action-oriented**
- 4) Include key statistics and sex-disaggregated data progressively in more chapters and include specific recommendations addressed to the National Statistical Offices on collection of sex-disaggregated data in Chapter 18 (Statistics)**
- 5) Adopt common language and definitions to report on different forms of gender-based violence, not limited to domestic violence, according to the Istanbul Convention**
- 6) Include a thorough analysis of gender-based violence issues under the Rule of Law section (while keeping a cross-reference under the fundamental rights section) since limited access to justice, inadequate law enforcement responses and failures of criminal justice systems severely impact on the victims/survivors and limit their opportunities to live free from the threat of violence**
- 7) Ensure the guidelines require attention to the situation of women belonging to minorities, women with different abilities and other vulnerable groups and subject to multiple discriminations in relevant chapters (especially Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment, Chapter 23 Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, Chapter 24 Justice, Freedom and Security, Chapter 26 Education and Culture, and Chapter 28 Consumer and Health Protection)**

- 8) Include a gender perspective in reporting on the legacies of the 1990s conflicts, including the situation of women victims/survivors of war-related sexual violence and especially access to justice, redress mechanisms and reparations
- 9) Report on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in line with the EU GAP III in Chapter 31 (Foreign, Security and Defence Policy), Good Neighbourly Relations and Regional Cooperation, Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia
- 10) Report on the role of women's CSOs in the section on civil society, including their role as service providers, contributions to the EU integration process, peacebuilding and reconciliation work



*'Women, let's go' (Srb. 'Idemo žene') poster from the 8th of March 2023 protest for women's rights in Belgrade, Serbia
Photographer: Lara Koncar*

Background and purpose of the assessment

Commitments under the GAP III

On November 25th, 2020, the EU adopted **the Gender Action Plan III** (2021-2026)² (GAP III) to reaffirm EU's commitments to support gender equality and women's empowerment through its external action. The GAP III builds on the results of the previous action plan, a global consultation with civil society and an external independent evaluation of the GAP II.³ The GAP III comes at a crucial crossroad for women's rights globally as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic risks rolling back fragile gains for women and girls registered over the last 10 years. Similar to the previous one, the GAP III applies to developing, enlargement and neighbourhood countries including fragile, conflict-affected and post-conflict countries.

Box 1.

Pivotal areas in GAP III

- 1) Ensuring freedoms from all forms of gender-based violence
- 2) Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights
- 3) Promoting the economic and social rights / empowerment of women and girls
- 4) Promoting equal participation and leadership
- 5) Integrating the Women, Peace and Security Agenda
- 6) Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation

Based on the recommendations of the external evaluation, the GAP III recognises the need for a more strategic, coordinated and coherent engagement of the EU at country level through the development of **Country Level Implementation Plans** (CLIPs) which will set policy priorities, key actions and objectives for each country. These plans, developed in partnership with national stakeholders, are also meant to be informed by **Gender Country Profiles** and updated sector-specific **Gender Analyses** for the priority areas. CLIPs should also further inform the EC Country Reports.

Box 2.

What should the gender analysis include?

According to the Guidance Note developed for DG NEAR and EUD Staff⁴ under the previous GAP II, which is unlikely to change substantially under the current plan, the gender analysis for the thematic priorities should at a minimum indicate:

- Key statistics on the situation of women and girls, men and boys, which will also provide the baseline for future measurement (relevant statistics that reflect the thematic or concentration areas);
- Key barriers to achieving gender equality (including social norms, legislative, institutional capacity, political will etc.);
- Analysis of additional levels of discrimination (e.g. particular vulnerability of disabled women to violence);
- Existing national gender mechanism in the partner country;
- A mapping of who is actively working for gender equality (CSOs, donors, International Financial Institutions, line ministries etc.);
- A mapping of knowledge / information gaps (e.g. sex-age disaggregated statistical information);
- A clear assessment of where the EUD can add value;
- Realistic objectives / opportunities for policy and political dialogue.

² [Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council – EU Gender Action Plan III: An ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action](#)

³ [Evaluation of the EU's External Action Support to Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment \(2010-2018\)](#)

⁴ Guidance Note on EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 for DG NEAR HQ and EUD staff (1 April 2016).

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO EC COUNTRY REPORTS?

The Western Balkans Strategy adopted in February 2018⁵ provided renewed impetus to the EU's engagement in the region and reinforced its leverage. The EC Country Reports are the **key policy instrument the EU has, to monitor progress of and exert pressure on** Western Balkan governments on the path towards meeting the accession criteria. As a key instrument of the EU, the EC Country Reports should be informed by robust gender evidence to be able to meet the ambitious targets set under the GAP III and the adopted CLIPs. Progress in the implementation of such plans should also be reported under the Country Reports to ensure that political pressure is attached to gender equality reforms in all Western Balkan countries.

AIM OF THE PRESENT ASSESSMENT

This is the fifth Gender Analysis of EC Country Reports for the Western Balkans. The aim is to assess progress/regress year on year in the gender mainstreaming of the Country Reports, **identify areas where a gender perspective can be further strengthened across different chapters and include country-specific recommendations for the following year**. The criteria used for the assessment are the same to ensure consistency in the methodology. The starting point were the instructions included in the Guidance Note developed by DG NEAR for the implementation of the GAP II, which provide details about the key components of a gender analysis.⁶ We argue that the same components should be included in the EC Country Reports although adapted to the nature of the documents, which is not that of an internal gender analysis but rather of external documents of both technical and political nature.

CRITERIA USED FOR THE ASSESSMENT

Based on the key components of a gender analysis suggested by the Guidance Note of DG NEAR for the GAP II, seven criteria were developed to capture the extent to which EC Country Reports are informed by gender analyses and evidence. The selection of criteria is further inspired by the vision, mandate and mission of The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, to support women's rights organisations in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings. Hence, the criteria include a strong focus on women and women's organisations.

1. Attention to gender equality (legislation, mechanisms and implementation) including potential barriers to achieving it (social norms, legislative, institutional barriers etc.)
2. Inclusion of key statistics on the situation of women, men, girls and boys
3. Attention to all forms of gender-based violence (including in war crime cases)
4. Intersectionality including reference to Roma women, women refugees and IDPs, women with different abilities
5. Reference to roles and challenges of women's organisations
6. Account of women's roles in peacebuilding, dealing with the past and reconciliation
7. Integration of gender into other chapters/sections other than the fundamental rights section (i.e. Public administration, Rule of Law, Economic section)

⁵ [A credible enlargement perspective for an enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans](#) (February 2018).

⁶ See box 2 on page 9.

Dashboard

For each country a traffic light system is used to provide a snapshot of the quality of the reports according to each criterion.



Green indicates that the quality of the EC report in relation to the specific criterion is good.



Yellow indicates that the quality of the report in relation to the specific criterion is somewhat good but could be improved.



Orange indicates that the quality of the report in relation to the specific criterion is not very good and presents a number of shortcomings.



Red indicates that the quality of the report in relation to the specific criterion is poor.



Gradient colours, for example from yellow to green, indicate that the quality of the report in relation to the specific criterion is transitioning between two colours



The upward facing arrow indicates a positive trend compared to 2021



The downward facing arrow indicates a negative trend compared to 2021



The horizontal arrow indicates no change compared to 2021



Great achievement

Albania



Summary

The 2022 Albania Report⁸ shows considerable improvement in the gender mainstreaming of some of its Chapters. First and foremost, it increased the number of official recommendations by introducing a new recommendation calling for the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality, the Law on Gender Equality and ensure gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting for sectoral strategies. Thorough attention is given to women from minority groups in Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health protection) and 19 (Social policy and employment) and there is a comprehensive account of the situation of LGBTQI people. New issues such as sex-selective abortions, women's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), property rights and access to justice are included. Chapter 31 refers to women, peace and security commitments of Albania as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council 2022-2023. Overall, these improvements show a greater commitment to the integration of gender aspects in the report. However, an accurate analysis of the systemic barriers women face in Albanian society is still missing and progressively a gender perspective should be included also in other Chapters, including Chapter 26 (Education and Culture), Chapter 27 (Environment and Climate Change) and Chapter 11 (Agriculture and Rural Development).

Country	Chapter	Official recommendations in grey boxes
Albania	Fundamental rights	Implement the national strategy for gender equality, the law on gender equality and ensure gender-mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting for sectoral strategies
	Chapter 28 Consumer and Health Protection	Guarantee equal access to quality health services for vulnerable populations, including Roma and Egyptian minorities, older people, people with pre-existing mental health problems, people with disabilities, rural or remote populations, notably for women and girls belonging to these groups who are often subjected to multiple forms of discrimination

Attention to gender equality

Overall, the gender mainstreaming of the Albania Report improved but the section on equality between women and men continues to be weak. While the report refers to the new Strategy on Gender Equality (2021-2030) and the funding gap which hampered the implementation of the previous strategy, the section lacks a consistent analysis of the legislative, social, cultural barriers women continue to face in exercising their rights and of the contributions of women in different sectors. The reference to the impact of Covid-19 on women, in particular in relation to employment, unpaid household and care work is welcome but specific recommendations are missing. The report adequately addresses the discrimination LGBTQI persons continue to face in Albanian society highlighting how pervasive physical aggressions and hate speech, particularly online, are. While the report recognises that the previous action plan on LGBTQI persons did not produce results, it fails to include a specific recommendation for the government in this respect.

⁸ EC [Albania Country Report](#) (2022).

Inclusion of key statistics

This year's report includes data on women in Parliament, in municipal elections, in local governments, and in the Constitutional Court as new judges. Overall data on cases of domestic violence and on trafficking in human beings is included but not disaggregated by sex, though the report indicates that women and girls are particularly at risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour and criminal exploitation. This year's report also includes sex-disaggregated data on financial literacy. The chapter on social policy and employment includes the employment and unemployment rates of women and men indicating that there is a persistent gender gap.

Sexual and gender-based violence

As in previous years, the report covers extensively the issue of domestic violence and trafficking of human beings (including specifically women) but does not refer to other forms of gender-based violence, as prescribed by the Istanbul Convention. The report refers to the fact that Albania submitted the first report on implementation of the Istanbul Convention and it could have referred to the contributions of women's civil society organisations in this area. The increase in cases of domestic violence and murders of women and girls within family relationships in 2021 is reported, establishing a connection with the lockdown period. There is no information on the shelters run by women's organisations, and their contribution to the fight against GBV is not acknowledged. The section on trafficking in human beings refers to the fact that women and children are particularly at risk of trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation but does not include sex-disaggregated data. Contrary to what is stated in the report, during 2021 the National Coalition of Antitrafficking Shelters (NACS) in Albania reported an increase in the number of identified victims of trafficking.⁹ While the report refers to the NGO-run shelters, it could have further covered the key support provided by women's organisations to victims of trafficking in relation to provision of services for their socio-economic reintegration and access to justice. The report should introduce an official recommendation on trafficking of women and girls given the prevalence of the phenomenon in Albania.

Intersectionality – reference to Roma women, women refugees, women IDPs and other women subject to multiple discriminations

The attention paid to women from minority groups in this year's report should be commended. The report refers to the adoption of the new National Action Plan for equality, inclusion and participation of Roma and Egyptians (2021-2025) and preparation for the long-awaited population and housing census, including on minority population areas now postponed to 2023. Specific attention is paid to the Roma and Egyptian communities in several chapters including with regards to fundamental rights, education, trafficking, employment, access to health care, including sexual and reproductive rights, and social housing. Particular attention is paid to women from Roma and Egyptian communities, as well as other minorities and vulnerable groups in Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection). The recommendation to continue to improve access to health services for vulnerable groups, including women and girls belonging to minority groups is welcome and progress in its implementation should be closely monitored.

References to roles and challenges of women's organisations

The report notes that the implementation of the new Law on Registration of Non-Profit Organisations adopted in June 2021 has not started yet and that there has been no progress in the implementation of the roadmap on an enabling environment for civil society, notably as regards the law on voluntarism. The reference to the need to strengthen cooperation between civil society and the Government to ensure meaningful participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in decision-making processes, including in the context of the EU accession negotiations is welcome. Similar to the 2021 report, this year's report does not acknowledge the role and contributions of women CSOs in relation to support to victims of domestic violence and trafficking in human beings, nor does it recognise their role in capacity-building of local institutions and police in developing a victim-centered approach.

⁹ The [2022 Trafficking in Persons Report](#) indicates that government and NGOs identified 154 potential victims and five official victims, compared with 81 potential victims and five official victims in 2020. Of these, 61 were sex trafficking victims, 65 forced labor victims, and 33 victims of multiple types of exploitation; 99 were female, and 60 were male; 112 were children, and 47 were adults.

Integration of gender into other chapters/sections

Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) includes statistics on women's and men's employment and unemployment and refers to the persistent gender gap that should be structurally addressed. It also refers to the gender pay gap and to the need to harmonise legislation with the Work-Life balance Directive. Chapter 18 (Statistics) refers that collection of sex-disaggregated data has improved but further efforts are needed to collect disaggregated data for certain groups, especially on prevalence of violence and harassment at work which should be disaggregated by sex, geographical location, age, ethnicity, disabilities, and migratory status. Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection) tackles the issue of health inequalities among the Roma and Egyptian minorities and access to healthcare for women facing multiple discriminations. Other chapters, including Chapter 26 (Education and Culture), Chapter 27 (Environment and Climate Change) and Chapter 11 (Agriculture and Rural Development) should be gender mainstreamed next.

Recommendations for the 2023 Albania Report:

1. Add an overview of structural social, cultural and legislative barriers towards gender equality and the active roles women play in society in the fundamental rights section
2. Include a specific recommendation on curbing trafficking of women and girls, identifying victims and ensuring access to justice and services
3. Include an official recommendation on the need to harmonise legislation with the Work-Life Balance Directive and the implementation of targeted measures to bridge the gender gap in employment
4. Include sex-disaggregated data on gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings
5. Ensure attention to all forms of gender-based violence in line with the Istanbul Convention definition
6. Extend the reporting on Albania's implementation of its National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and WPS in Chapter 31 and on the role of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation
7. Recognise the obstacles women face in access to justice in particular in relation to gender-based violence
8. Include a reference to the role of women's CSOs in managing shelters for women victims/survivors of gender-based violence, including trafficking, and providing support to victims in the absence of adequate state measures
9. Continue to integrate an intersectional perspective across the report and in particular in relation to women belonging to vulnerable groups

Bosnia and Herzegovina



Summary

The 2022 Bosnia and Herzegovina Report¹⁰ includes one official recommendation in relation to the introduction of uniform maternity leave benefits throughout the country. Some improvements are noted in this year's report, in particular the inclusion of a gender perspective in Chapter 28, with reference to the challenges pertaining to women's access to health services, the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on women, particularly in relation to frontline workers, and the issue of obstetric violence. The greater attention to women from marginalised groups, especially Roma women, is also welcome and should be further expanded. Overall however, the Country Report continues to have a piece-meal approach to gender and certain sections are particularly weak. The section on elections includes only a cursory reference to the absence of women as party leaders and was a missed opportunity to emphasise that women also demanded a change in electoral standards and quotas, pledging for women and men to line up alternately on each candidate list. The situation of women's political participation both at national and local level should be further analysed and accompanied by a specific recommendation. Unlike other Country Reports, the BiH one does not provide information and data on domestic and other forms of gender-based violence, simply highlighting that the institutional response should be improved. The multiple issues relating to women's access to justice, reparations and victim-centered support in criminal proceedings should be emphasized and accompanied by a recommendation.

Country	Chapter	Official recommendations in grey boxes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Introduce a uniform minimum level of maternity leave benefits and protection throughout the country, starting by harmonising the definitions of maternity, paternity and parental leave.

Attention to gender equality

The section on equality between women and men could be further improved. The report indicates that there has been limited efforts towards addressing priority 9 during the reporting period. It alludes to the lack of harmonisation of legislation on gender equality across the country, to the implementation of the 2018-2022 Gender Action Plan and the Action Plan on WPS. The section lacks a comprehensive analysis of the barriers preventing women from accessing their rights, including specifically for women belonging to national minorities, women with different abilities, elderly women, women from rural areas and women heads of households. On the representation of women in politics, both at national and local level, the report lacks information, data and analysis. This year's report missed the opportunity to mention the failure by political parties to implement quotas during elections and the proposed amendments to the Electoral Law, which requested for each candidate list to have an equal number of male and female candidates distributed alternately, and that the missing number of elected women of at least 40% in parliaments is filled from the compensation lists.¹¹ The re-introduction of the issue of the lack of harmonisation of maternity and paternity benefits across entities and cantons is welcome but it should be included in the context of an overall analysis of

¹⁰ EC [Bosnia Herzegovina Country Report](#) (2022)

¹¹ Proposals for amendments of the Electoral Law were provided by the coalition "Let's share responsibility equally" and sent to the Commission for Achieving Gender Equality of the BiH Parliament and the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Amendments to the BiH Election Legislation.

the lack of adequate social services and the need to harmonise the legislation with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive. The section on LGBTQI rights is rather comprehensive, highlighting the lack of prosecution of hate crimes and hate speech, despite specific provisions in this respect. The reference to the lack of legal recognition of social and economic rights of same-sex couples and to the situation of intersex and transgender persons is welcome.

Inclusion of key statistics

This year's report does not include data on women's representation in elected bodies, in the judiciary, it merely refers to the under-representation of women at all levels of decision-making. Unlike most other reports, there is no data on sexual and gender-based violence. While official statistics on gender-based violence are missing, reports and data collected by women's organisations could be referred to.¹² Similar to the 2021 report, there is a reference to the need to improve data collection to enable the development of sound policies to target key gender gaps and to provide data on gender-based violence.

Attention to sexual and gender-based violence

The report highlights that gender-based violence is an issue of concern, however it does not refer to any specific form of violence and there are no official recommendations in this respect. The report continues to highlight the need to improve institutional response to gender-based violence but fails to recognise that women-run CSOs are the main providers of services to victims/survivors of gender-based violence in the absence of effective state-led response and that they need to be adequately funded. The references to the need to accelerate prosecution of crimes of sexual violence, provide reparation to victims of war crimes and ensure witness protection, are welcome. The report should have further highlighted the low penalty policy for all GBV criminal offences across the country and the need to harmonise legislation on protection against GBV and on the status and access to reparations for women civilian victims/survivors of violence. Furthermore, the report should start addressing different forms of gender-based violence, as prescribed by the Istanbul Convention. The section on trafficking in human beings does not refer to women and girls, despite the cross-reference in Chapter 23.

Intersectionality – reference to women subject to multiple discriminations

The intersectional approach in this year's report considerably improved, with references to women and girls from minority groups facing multiple discriminations in different Chapters. Particularly welcome is the reference to domestic violence, early marriages and trafficking as key violations of Roma women's rights in the fundamental rights section. References to women and girls belonging to ethnic minorities, women with different abilities, women from rural areas and single mothers, as main categories subject to multiple forms of discrimination, should also be included in Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection) in relation to access to health services, Chapter 26 (Education and Culture) and Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment).

Reference to roles and challenges of women's organisations

The report indicates that there was no progress in the reporting period in creating an enabling environment for civil society, as recommended by the EU Opinion priority 11. In particular, activists dealing with sensitive issues such as anti-corruption, women's rights, LGBTQI rights, migrants and the environment continue to be exposed to threats and attacks. However, no specific attention is paid to the role and challenges of women's organisations who play a crucial role in reaching out to the most vulnerable in the country. As the country has now acquired candidate status, the report should include a specific recommendation to ensure meaningful participation of CSOs in decision-making processes, including in the context of the EU accession negotiations.

¹² For example, see the report [Women's Rights in the Western Balkans](#), Kvinna till Kvinna (2022)

Account of women's roles in peacebuilding, dealing with the past and reconciliation

The report refers to the Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, efforts to ensure greater participation of women in police and the army, need for increased participation of women in peace and security institutions in the section on fundamental rights. While these are important references, Chapter 31 (Foreign Security and Defence Policy), which should refer to BIH's alignment of priorities on WPS with the EU Gender Action Plan III, remains gender-blind. Also, as in previous years, the role of women CSOs in promoting peace and reconciliation, searching for missing persons, providing support and legal aid to victims/survivors of sexual violence, ensuring remembrance also for women victims of the war is not acknowledged.

Integration of gender into other chapters/sections

The Chapters on functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reform are particularly weak this year in relation to gender. Chapter 24 (Justice, freedom and security) includes cursory reference to women. Chapter 19 (Employment and Social Policy) refers to women's employment and unemployment rate and gender equality and non-discrimination provisions, which are rarely enforced, but fails to report on the multiple barriers women face in accessing employment. The re-introduction of the official recommendation on harmonisation of maternity benefits in Chapter 19 is welcome. Particularly welcome is the attention to women and girls in Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection). Other Chapters of the report, such as Chapter 26 (Education and Culture), Chapter 27 (Environment and Climate Change), Chapter 11 (Agriculture and Rural Development) and Chapter 31 (Foreign, Security and Defence Policy) should be gender-mainstreamed next.



*Representatives of partner organisations and Kvinna till Kvinna at the Brussels Advocacy Week 2022, Brussels, Belgium
Photographer: Johanna de Tessières*

Recommendations for the 2023 Bosnia and Herzegovina Report:

1. Include at least one official recommendation pertaining to gender equality under the political criteria and in particular:
 - a. the adoption of the amendments to the Electoral Law to ensure each candidate list has an equal number of male and female candidates distributed alternately and that the missing number of elected women of at least 40% be filled from the compensation lists.
 - b. the adoption of the amendments to the Law on the Council of Ministry of BiH to introduce a minimum quota of 40% for the representation of the less represented sex in the Council of Ministers.
2. Include at least one official recommendation in relation to priority no. 9 of the EU Opinion on BiH in relation to the full implementation of the Law on Gender Equality
3. Recommend strengthening cooperation between civil society and the Government and ensure meaningful participation of CSOs in decision-making processes, including in the context of the EU accession negotiations.
4. Include an analysis of the key legislative, social and cultural barriers hindering progress towards gender equality in particular in relation to women's political participation and representation, women's employment and women's access to health and social services
5. Acknowledge the role of women's organisations as first respondents to the needs of women and vulnerable communities including the provision of services to victims/survivors of gender-based violence
6. Acknowledge the role of women's organisations in peacebuilding, remembrance and reconciliation
7. Call on the establishment of a confidential and safe system for filing complaints regarding harassment, sexual harassment and other form of gender-based discrimination in the workplace and public space (and on the timely and effective response of prosecutor's offices and courts when it comes to these cases)
8. Call for harmonisation of the BiH legislation with the EU Victims Directive¹³, which is part of the *acquis communautaire* and calls for minimum safeguards for the victims of crimes, including gender-based violence as well as harmonisation of legislation and measures for victims of sexual violence during the war to ensure equal access to justice and reparations
9. Call for the harmonisation of BiH legislation with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, including in relation to maternity, paternity and parental leave
10. Report on the barriers women from Roma and other minorities are facing in access to education, employment, health services including on sexual and reproductive health and rights, the wide-spread gender-based violence and the practice of forced juvenile marriages affecting Roma girls

¹³ [Directive 2012/29/EU](#) establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime



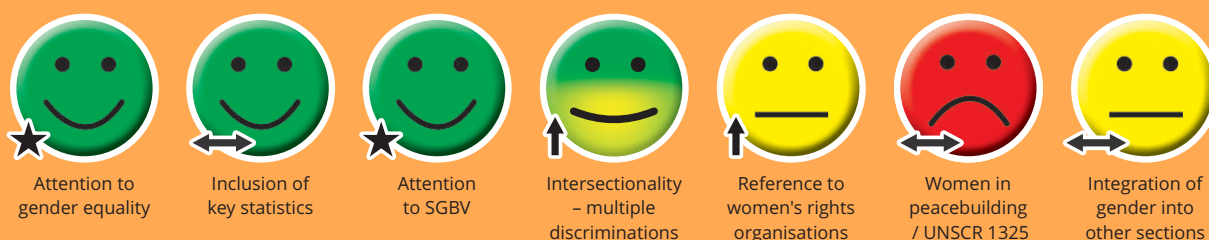
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KVINNA

Representatives of partner organisations and Kvinna till Kvinna as panelists at the 'Women's Rights in the Western Balkans (2022)' report presentation during the Brussels Advocacy Week 2022, Brussels, Belgium
Photographer: Johanna de Tessieres

Aleksandra Petric
United Women Banja Luka

Laura Davis
Peacebuilding Liaison

Kosovo



Summary

The 2022 Kosovo Report¹⁴ continues the positive trend of mainstreaming gender meaningfully across many Chapters. This year's report includes three official recommendations on gender equality issues. The section on gender equality provides a comprehensive analysis of the situation of women and girls in the country, acknowledging the multiple factors that are hindering progress towards equality. There is also greater attention to the situation of women from non-majority communities, especially Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali, in different Chapters compared to the 2021 report. For the first time, the contributions of CSOs in advancing the gender equality agenda is acknowledged. The reporting on women's access to property rights is also welcome. The report, however, fails to address Kosovo's commitments to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and whether they are in line with EU GAP III provisions, as well as to monitor how they are integrated in the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. Also, the contributions of women's organisations in peacebuilding and reconciliation are not accounted for.

Country	Chapter	Official recommendations in grey boxes
Kosovo	Fundamental rights	Strengthen the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, adopt the Law on Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women, continue the efforts to ensure proper functioning of the system of protection, prevention and adjudication on all forms of gender-based violence
	Fight against organised crime	Implement the strategy and action plan against trafficking in human beings 2022-2026, adopting a victim-centered approach
	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Adopt the new Law on Labour in line with relevant <i>EU acquis</i> , in particular in relation to non-discrimination in employment and parental leave

Attention to gender equality

The section on gender equality provides a comprehensive analysis of the situation of women and girls in the country, acknowledging the multiple factors that are hindering progress towards equality, in particular the low participation of women in politics, in the labour market, challenges in access to finance, property rights and access to justice. The rights of LGBTQI persons are also addressed, with reference to the non-approval of the provisions on civil partnerships for same-sex couples in the draft Civil Code. The debate on the Civil Code resulted in the use of homophobic language by MPs, further exacerbating discrimination and prejudice towards LGBTQI persons. The report further notes the increase in domestic violence towards LGBTQI persons during the pandemic and the increased request for psycho-social support services, all of which are provided by CSOs. As for the legal gender recognition, the report indicates that the government accepted a concept document on Civil Status law, incorporating suggestions of civil society.

¹⁴ EC [Kosovo Country Report](#) (2022)

Inclusion of key statistics

The report includes sex-disaggregated data and statistics in many sections including with regards to the number of women in elected positions in parliament and local governments; as judges, prosecutors and mediators; as foreign fighters and returnees from conflict zones; as missing persons; in education; in the labour market. Data on cases of domestic violence is included but not disaggregated by sex. Chapter 18 (Statistics) could include a specific recommendation for state authorities to improve collection, maintenance and transparent reporting of sex-disaggregated data, including on hate crimes and gender-based violence.

Sexual and gender-based violence

The Report covers extensively the issue of domestic violence and mentions different forms of gender-based violence. It recommends the adoption of the Law on Domestic Violence and Violence against Women and stresses that the Law should be further amended as to include different forms of gender-based violence in accordance with the Istanbul Convention. The report recalls the steps taken by the government, including the adoption of the new Strategy and Action Plan on Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women (2022 – 2026) but it highlights that, in practice, there has been limited progress in preventing and combating domestic violence and reintegrating victims. Other forms of gender-based violence are also mentioned, in particular violence against women in public life and body shaming. The issue of sexual violence during the conflict is also addressed in the section on domestic handling of war crimes. On trafficking, the report refers to the adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings 2022-2026, which introduce a victim-centered approach, and indicates that Kosovo remains a country of origin, transit and destination of victims of trafficking, especially for sexual exploitation.

Intersectionality – reference to women subject to multiple discriminations

There is considerable improvement compared to the 2021 report in how the situation of women belonging to non-majority communities is addressed and included in different Chapters. In particular, this year's report mentions the low participation of women from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in political parties, the multiple discriminations they face in access to health, education and employment. Women and girls in these communities are often subject to early, forced marriages, stereotypes and domestic violence. It is positive that the report refers to challenges in accessing healthcare services, as this contributes to the high number of unwanted and child pregnancies, although it should have been included under Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection). Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) recommends the government to address discrimination of women, particularly those belonging to non-majority communities, in employment.

References to roles and challenges of women's organisations

The report recognises that civil society plays a critical role in advancing gender equality, contributing to the improvement of legislation, monitoring the implementation of policies, providing services, assisting victims of violence and raising awareness. This is very welcome though it would be good to also include an acknowledgement of the contribution of women CSOs in the framework of the EU accession process under the section on civil society.

Account of women's roles in peacebuilding, dealing with the past and reconciliation

The report fails to include a gender perspective and recognise the critical role of women CSOs in contributing to peace in the sections on handling of war crimes, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation. There is also no reference to Kosovo commitments to the WPS agenda and whether they are in line with EU GAP III provisions. The section on the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, as in previous years, ignores the EU commitments on WPS enshrined in the GAP III and how women's rights, needs and priorities have been largely excluded from the negotiations.¹⁵

¹⁵ Kosovo Women's Network, [A Seat at the Table](#) - Women's contributions to and expectations from peacebuilding processes in Kosovo, 2021

Integration of gender into other sections

The section on the functioning of the market economy highlights the presence of a large informal sector and high inactivity rates, especially among women in Kosovo. The section on functioning of the labour market indicates that the introduction of maternity leave for women unemployed for longer than 12 months could act as a disincentive for women planning motherhood to take on (formal) work. Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) includes data on women's employment and unemployment rates, which is particularly high for young women, and inequality between women and men in employment due to gender-based discrimination in recruitment, promotion, pay and contract length. It further recommends the government to address discrimination against women, particularly those belonging to minorities, in employment. Next year this could be included as an official recommendation. Chapter 26 (Education and Culture), Chapter 11 (Agriculture and rural development), Chapter 27 (Environment and Climate Change) and the sections on Normalization of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia and on Neighbourly Relations, among others, should be gender mainstreamed next.

Recommendations for the 2023 Kosovo Report:

1. Call for the harmonisation of the Law on Local Elections and Law on General Elections with the Law on Gender Equality to ensure equal representation of women and men in elected bodies
2. Emphasize the need for the adoption of the new Labour Law, in line with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, including well-regulated maternity, paternity and parental leave
3. Report thoroughly and/or include a cross-reference on gender-based violence under the Rule of Law Chapter, in line with the National Strategy on Rule of Law; condemn institutional neglect related to gender-based violence and require better institutional coordination as well as allocation of resources for social services
4. Continue to include an intersectional perspective in different Chapters of the report recognising how gender intersects with other forms of discrimination. Ensure that information concerning women's access to health services is included in Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection)
5. Include a gender perspective and reference to Kosovo's commitments on UNSCR 1325 on WPS in the section on normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and Good Neighbourly relations
6. Include an account of how escalating tensions between Kosovo and Serbia are affecting the security of communities, through consultation with local CSOs, including how men and women are differently impacted, and report on the efforts of CSOs, and specifically women CSOs, working to build peace
7. Recognise the role of women's organisations in providing services to women victims/survivors of gender-based violence and their active role in peacebuilding, remembrance and reconciliation
8. Recommend the adoption of specific affirmative measures targeting women to increase their active participation in the labour market and to close the gender pay gap

Montenegro



Summary

The gender mainstreaming of the Montenegro Report¹⁶ continues to improve year on year. The report has doubled the number of official recommendations attending gender equality issues, bringing them to six. Gender issues are covered in an increased number of chapters, including Chapter 18 (Statistics), Chapter 23 (Financial Control), Chapter 25 (Science and Research) and Chapter 26 (Education and Culture). The report includes a holistic analysis of the main obstacles that prevent women from enjoying equal rights including in access to public life, employment, economic opportunities, inheritance and property rights, highlighting the adverse impact of patriarchal norms and stereotypes on women's rights and the lack of political will to prioritise these issues. Different forms of gender-based violence are accounted for, including femicides, domestic violence, sexual harassment in the workspace, trafficking, forced marriages, cyber stalking, psychological violence, smear campaigns and hate speech against women in public/political life, in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention. Attention to women from minority groups could be further enhanced. Unlike previous years, the report does not refer to UNSCR 1325 and it does not account for the role of women in peace and security.

Country	Chapter	Official recommendations in grey boxes
Montenegro	Parliament	The capacity of Parliament to integrate and oversight gender equality issues needs to be enhanced.
	Fundamental rights	Revise legislation to: increase protection against domestic violence, discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech; comply with 2018 UN Universal Periodic Review recommendation to prohibit the statute of limitations for criminal offences of torture and other forms of ill treatment; fully harmonise with the 2020 same-sex partnership law; to fully align with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; criminalise all forms of marriage with a person under age 18 and to align protection of personal data
	Fundamental rights	Improve interinstitutional cooperation to achieve more efficient protection from all kinds of discrimination, better access to justice, full enjoyment of procedural rights, and free legal aid for victims of human rights violations and crimes, in particular children, women, persons belonging to minorities, including Roma and Egyptians, and persons with disabilities

¹⁶ EC [Country Report Montenegro](#) (2022)

	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Reform and strengthen the Employment Agency in order to allow it to play its role as a modern public employment service, designing and implementing quality employment activation measures, ensuring these are targeted, including at young people, women, persons with disabilities, vulnerable persons and minorities, including Roma
	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Monitor implementation of the revised labour law and reinforce staffing in and the institutional structure of the labour inspectorate, also ensuring that issues regarding women, persons with disabilities, minorities including Roma and vulnerable people, are more robustly addressed.
	Chapter 25 Science and Research	Increase investments in research and innovation programmes and participation in the Horizon Europe programme, ensuring that this also targets women.

Attention to gender equality

Overall attention to gender equality steadily improved in this year's report. The introduction of three additional recommendations pertaining to gender equality issues is welcome. The report refers to the adoption of the 2021-2025 National Strategy for Gender Equality, which includes some important novelties for women's rights in Montenegro. However, it should be noted that the evaluation of the Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2022 showed that only 30% of all measures were implemented.¹⁷ The report analyses the barriers hindering women's enjoyment of equal rights and affecting women's access to political life, employment, economic opportunities, inheritance and property rights and provides a thorough account of different forms of gender-based violence. The protection of rights of LGBTQI persons is covered extensively, and the fact that hate speech and homophobic incidents against LGBTQI persons including by members of Parliament continue to be a matter of concern. The recommendation to fully harmonise the legislation with the 2020 Same-sex Partnership Law is very welcome and ongoing monitoring of its implementation in the next reporting periods will be crucial. Progress in the setting up of the working group to prepare the draft law on Legal Gender Recognition is noted.

Inclusion of key statistics

The report includes percentages on women's participation in politics, which continues to be low. The report also includes data on women judges and prosecutors, convicts and detainees, migrants, trafficked women, women in the labour market, women unemployed and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). There is no sex-disaggregated data on domestic violence, though the report notes that specialised NGOs registered an increase of around 20% in cases in 2021 compared to the previous year. The report also indicates that there is no available data on sexual harassment at work. The number of Roma girls and boys in child marriages is also included.

Attention to sexual and gender-based violence

The report covers different forms of gender-based violence offering a comprehensive account of the main types of violence affecting women in Montenegro. The report acknowledges that gender-based violence is connected with deeply rooted social behaviours that discriminate against women and that it constitutes a serious criminal, societal and public health issue. Domestic violence remains the most prevalent form of gender-based violence but the report also addresses the rise in femicides and other forms of gender-based violence such as sexual harassment in the workspace, trafficking, forced marriages, cyber stalking, psychological violence, smear campaigns and hate speech against women in public/political life. The report stresses that the 2021-2025 National Strategy for Gender Equality must address the issue of gender-based violence and domestic violence, however, these issues will be covered by the separate National Strategy for the Implementation of the Istanbul

¹⁷ [The report on external evaluation of the Action Plan 2021-2022 for the implementation of the Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025](#). OSCE, October 2022.

Convention. The report acknowledges that the state does not provide enough specialised services for women but fails to recognise the key role of women specialised CSOs in this respect. The report should acknowledge a particularly worrying trend of shrinking space for the work of women CSOs providing specialised services for women and children, mostly due to inadequate system of distribution of CSO funding and cumbersome licensing process.¹⁸

Intersectionality – reference to women subject to multiple discriminations

The report pays attention to the situation of minorities and vulnerable groups, including Roma and Egyptians, persons with disabilities and LGBTQI persons. It also calls on the authorities to improve interinstitutional cooperation to achieve more efficient protection from discrimination, access to justice, enjoyment of procedural rights and free legal aid for victims of human rights violations and crimes. There is a welcome recommendation in Chapter 19 (Employment and Social Policy) to monitor the implementation of the revised Labour Law and that issues regarding women, persons with disabilities, minorities including Roma and vulnerable people are more robustly addressed. The report refers to the issue of child marriages and the issue of trafficking, to which Roma women and children are particularly exposed. Further attention to women belonging to minorities could be included in relation to health inequalities in Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection), access to education, housing and property rights.

References to roles and challenges of women's organisations

The report recognises that civil society plays an active role in the EU accession process and recommends the strengthening of the consultation and cooperation mechanisms between institutions and civil society in this framework. This is welcome, given that several laws and strategies, such as the new social protection strategy, were adopted without proper consultation of civil society. The role of CSOs supporting victims of trafficking and those providing specialised services is acknowledged. The section on gender-based violence could have recognised the role of women's CSOs in providing specialised services to victims/survivors of gender-based violence.

Account of women's roles in peacebuilding, dealing with the past and reconciliation

Unlike previous years, this year's report does neither include information on the Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 nor on women's participation in peacebuilding.

Integration of gender into other chapters/sections

This year's report considerably extended the inclusion of gender issues and relevant official recommendations beyond the traditionally gender-mainstreamed chapters. The attention paid to women's political participation at national and local level is very welcome. It is also positive that the report highlights the capacity of the Parliament to integrate and oversight gender equality issues in the grey box, though this should be also accompanied by a specific recommendation on the need for political parties to respect the quota system, in line with CEDAW and ODIHR recommendations. Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) this year includes two recommendations that are aimed at addressing inequalities in the labour market and offers a detailed overview of the key barriers for women's employment. For the first time gender issues are included in Chapter 25 (Science and Research), Chapter 18 (Statistics), Chapter 23 (Financial Control) and Chapter 26 (Education and Culture). However, Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection) could further address the needs of women, minority and vulnerable groups in relation to access to quality health services. The section on Good Neighbourly Relations and Regional Cooperation and Chapter 31 (Foreign, Security and Defence Policy) should include reference to Montenegro's commitments to UNSCR 1325 in line with the EU GAP III and women's participation in peace and security.

¹⁸ Since 2018, NGOs must comply with the amended Law on Social and Child Protection by licensing their services through the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. This requires the organizations to meet high standards in human resources, procedures, and infrastructure, without state support.

Recommendations for the 2023 Montenegro Report:

1. Recommend adhering to relevant ODIHR and CEDAW¹⁹ recommendations to strengthen the parliamentary representation and participation of women in political and public life, including:
 - a. the revision of the Electoral Law to introduce a 40% quota for the less represented sex on electoral lists
 - b. the inclusion of a minimum percentage of Chairwomen of parliamentary working bodies
 - c. the inclusion of a minimum requirement for the percentage of female members of parliamentary working bodies and delegations not lower than the percentage of women lected in Parliament
 - d. the introduction of internal measures for political parties to promote women to senior positions within party structure and to increase visibility of female candidates
2. Recommend the adoption of the amendments to the Law on Domestic Violence and alignment of the definition of gender-based violence and violence against women across legislation in line with the Istanbul Convention and GREVIO recommendations
3. Recommend swift adoption of the new National Strategy on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention
4. Ensure the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and institutional practice are fully harmonized with CEDAW. Establish single database on cases of gender-based discrimination at the national level
5. Recommend the adoption of specific affirmative measures targeting women, particularly from marginalised groups, to increase their active participation in the labour market and to close the gender pay gap
6. Recommend that the system of licencing of CSOs providing specialised services to women victims/survivors of sexual violence be mindful of the principles of confidentiality and autonomy of women CSOs
7. Recommend that the state revises the system of funding for CSOs
8. Continue to include an intersectional perspective across different chapters including information and data on Roma and Egyptian women, women from rural areas, women heads of households, women with different abilities, elderly women
9. Include reference to UNSCR 1325 and its implementation in the section on Good Neighbourly Relations and Regional Cooperation as well as Chapter 31 (Foreign, Security and Defence Policy)
10. Recommend strengthening the institutional and administrative capacity and competencies of the national gender equality mechanism

¹⁹ Montenegro [Third Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women](#). CEDAW, September 2021.

North Macedonia



Summary

No progress can be noted in the gender mainstreaming of the 2022 North Macedonia Report²⁰ compared to 2021. Similar to last year, the report includes one official recommendation on discrimination in the fundamental rights section (though not explicitly referring to women and/or LGBTQI persons) and one on measures for low skilled unemployed people, including women, in Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment). The report accounts for the participation of women in politics both at national and local level and indicates that political parties should take further steps to encourage participation of women in the electoral process. This should be formulated as an official recommendation in the grey box. The report fails to address the issue of the rise of the anti-gender movement, and the urgent need to adopt the new Law on Gender Equality, which awaits approval in the Parliament since September 2022. The section on gender-based violence is slightly improved but continues to lack sex-disaggregated data, an analysis of the discriminatory social norms and conditions leading to violence against women as well as an overview of different forms of gender-based violence, though this year there is a welcome reference to femicide. Reference to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in North Macedonia was removed from this year's report and there is no progress in integrating a gender perspective into other chapters of the report.

Country	Chapter	Official recommendations in grey boxes
North Macedonia	Fundamental rights	Implement all the provisions on the Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, and allocate necessary resources enabling the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination to become fully functional.
	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Continue to implement activation measures for long-term and low skilled unemployed people, including women, people with disabilities and Roma, and ensure proper monitoring and evaluation of such measures.

Attention to gender equality

Overall, the report indicates that there has been an improvement in gender mainstreaming and women's rights. This is primarily attributed to the normative and policy framework, including for alignment with the Istanbul Convention, to integrate gender perspectives and align national law with the EU gender equality *acquis* and the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027, which however failed to incorporate the recommendations of CSOs. The Report refers to women's political participation both at local and national level and indicates that political parties should take further steps to encourage participation of women in the electoral process, but does not issue a specific recommendation in this respect. An overall analysis of the main social, cultural, economic and legislative barriers hindering progress towards full gender equality is missing. The report fails to address the issue of the rise of the anti-gender movement and the urgent need to adopt the new Law on Gender Equality, which awaits approval in the Parliament since September 2022. The issue of legal gender recognition is included again in this year's report. The report provides a good overview of the situation of LGBTQI persons, highlighting that there was no real progress in tackling discrimination based on sexual

²⁰ EC Country Report North Macedonia (2022).

orientation and gender identity. Homophobia and discrimination towards LGBTIQ persons continue and no progress was made to remove negative stereotypes and hate speech toward them in textbooks, or to adopt the national action plan for LGBTIQ for 2021-2025.

Inclusion of key statistics

The report includes data on women in elected positions at national and local level, as public sector employees, as asylum seekers and statistics on boys and girls in primary and secondary education. The section on the functioning of the labour market and the one on equality between women and men in employment point at the increase in participation in the labour market for both women and men, though the gender gap widened for the second year in a row. There is neither overall data on domestic violence nor on human trafficking, let alone sex-disaggregated data. The report acknowledges that the lack of reliable gender-disaggregated data across sectors creates constraints in developing evidence-based policies and measures but fails to introduce a specific recommendation in this respect. It further recalls that the Gender Equality Index from 2019 has not yet been updated.

Sexual and gender-based violence

This year's report slightly improved its account of gender-based violence, though much remains to be done. First and foremost, it could have included a specific recommendation in the grey box on the need to implement the Law on Prevention and Protection from violence, in addition to last year's recommendations. Secondly, there is an absence of any data or statistics on domestic violence or other forms of violence. In the absence of official public data and report, references to civil society reports on this matter could be added.²¹ The report rightly refers to the need to amend the Criminal Code and bring it in line with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention to protect women from all types of gender-based violence. The amendments to the Criminal Code proposed by CSOs, including on online sexual harassment, were all accepted. The report further refers some of the shortcomings of the current system of protection, prevention and punishment of cases of gender-based violence. There is neither sex-disaggregated data nor reference to women in the section on human trafficking which only reports on child victims.

Intersectionality - reference to women subject to multiple discriminations

The report continues to be rather weak in the integration of an intersectional perspective. It covers extensively the situation of the Roma community and mentions the adoption of the new strategy for Roma inclusion (2022-2030) which includes anti-gypsyism, education, employment, social care and healthcare, housing, civic registration and culture. However, while there is considerable attention to Roma children, there is only one cursory reference to Roma women and girls being vulnerable often due to unemployment. The report should further include an intersectional lens to address the multiple and intersecting forms of discriminations towards Roma women, women in rural areas, migrant, asylum seekers, refugee women and women in prostitution and recommend the adoption of targeted measures.

Reference to women's rights organisations

The report refers to the active role of civil society which continue to operate in an enabling environment, exercising a role both in decision-making and in oversight of the state activities. The report acknowledges that transparency in policy-making and inclusiveness of consultation mechanisms need to be improved. For example, the process of developing the IPA III Strategic Response and the connected Action Documents failed to properly involve CSOs. The North Macedonia report should include information on the role of civil society in the framework of the EU accession process and include a specific recommendation on enhancing the cooperation and consultation mechanisms in this respect. The report also fails to mention the rise of the anti-gender movement in the country and the attacks on CSOs and HRDs working on gender and human rights. There is an increased polarisation and attacks on sexuality education, sexual identities and diversity issues, perceived by the anti-gender groups as attacks against family and traditional values, which are not sanctioned.

²¹ For example, [Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in North Macedonia](#) (2022); [Gender-based violence in North Macedonia – a Status Quo Report](#) (2022)

Account of women's roles in peacebuilding, dealing with the past and reconciliation

This year's report removed any references to the WPS Agenda and the North Macedonia National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 adopted in 2020. The Chapter on good neighbourly relations, Chapter 30 (External Relations) and 31 (Foreign, Security and Defence Policy) remain gender-blind.

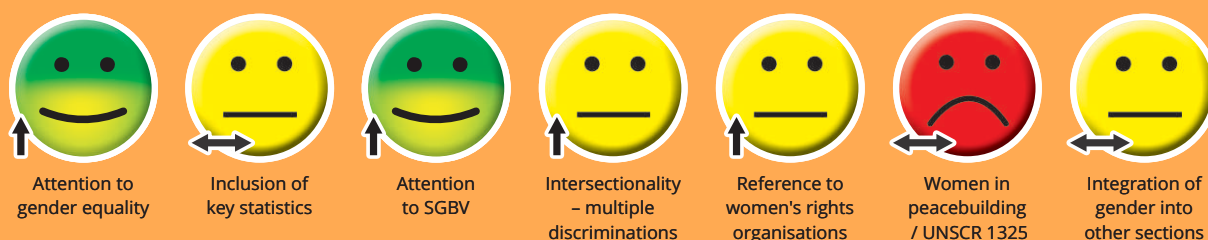
Integration of gender into other chapters/sections

There was no noticeable progress in integrating a gender perspective in other chapters. The report includes references to women/gender in the sections on political criteria and rule of law, fight against organised crime, existence of a functioning market economy, social policy and employment Chapters. In Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) there is a welcome reference to the national Law on Protection against Workplace Harassment and to the stringent requisites which require women to work for the same employer for six months to be able to access maternity benefits. The recommendation to continue to implement activation measures for unemployed people including women is welcome, yet it should not just refer to "low-skilled unemployed" but to all women. Chapter 26 (Education and Culture) mentions the adoption of the new concept for primary education which stresses inclusiveness but fails to mention the lack of progress in removing negative stereotypes and hate speech against LGBTQI people in textbooks. Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection), 27 (Environment and Climate Change), 31 (Foreign Security and Defence Policy), and 11 (Agriculture and rural development), to name a few, need to be gender mainstreamed next.

Recommendations for the 2023 North Macedonia Report:

1. Recommend the swift adoption of the new Law on Gender Equality and of the Law on Labour in line also with the provisions of the Work-Life Balance Directive
2. Recommend revising the Electoral Code of North Macedonia to support balanced representation of women and men candidates for mayors
3. Recommend the adoption of the new draft Criminal Code with the proposed amendments tackling all forms of violence against women in line with the Istanbul Convention
4. Recommend the adoption of the amendments to the Law on Civil Registry which regulate legal gender recognition based on self-determination
5. Recommend the adoption of the new Law on textbooks and other didactical and teaching materials that include mechanisms for prevention of discriminatory and stereotypical contents in textbooks in Chapter 26
6. Call for creating an enabling environment, safety and security for CSOs and HRDs by tackling and processing cases of misinformation and hate speech and ensuring protection to CSOs/HRDs against smear campaigns
7. Recommend improving systems for collecting and sharing of sex-disaggregated data and updating the Gender Equality Index
8. Recommend strengthening the cooperation and consultation mechanisms between state institutions and civil society in the framework of the EU accession process
9. Include a reference to the North Macedonia National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and monitor its implementation in Chapter 31 (Foreign, Security and Defence Policy), with cross-reference in the section on Good Neighbourly Relation and Regional Cooperation. Call for meaningful inclusion of women CSOs in the development, implementation and monitoring of the NAP on UNSCR 1325
10. Improve its intersectional perspective across different chapters, by highlighting the situation of women subject to multiple discriminations such as Roma women, women in rural areas, migrant, asylum seeking and refugee women, women in prostitution

Serbia



Summary

The gender mainstreaming of the 2022 Serbia Report²² slightly improved. The report includes now two recommendations attending to gender equality issues, one in the fundamental rights section and one in Chapter 19 (Employment and Social Policy). The EU should openly condemn the ongoing democratic backsliding of the country, glorification of convicted war criminals, continued restriction of civic space, attacks on HRDs, unequal access to media ahead of elections as well as disparities in campaign finance regulations, and issue specific recommendations in the relevant sections highlighting that backtracking in these areas jeopardises prospects of Serbia's accession to the EU. This year's report increases the attention to the situation of women and girls, including those at risk of multiple intersecting forms of discrimination such as Roma girls, and to the issue of human trafficking for the purpose of labour and sexual exploitation. There is also a welcome reference to the gender-based stereotypical preconceptions about childcare and household work which affect women's full participation in the labour market and the ones on gender equality and sexuality education in Chapter 26 (Education and Culture). Chapter 31 (Foreign Security and Defence Policy), the section on Good Neighbourly Relations and the Chapter on Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia should include attention to the participation of women in peacebuilding, war-time sexual violence and the situation of women victims/survivors, in line with UNSCR 1325 and the EU GAP III.

Country	Chapter	Official recommendations in grey boxes
Serbia	Fundamental rights	Start implementing the strategies on anti-discrimination, gender equality, violence against women and de-institutionalisation; actively counter hate-motivated crimes and establish a track record of investigation and convictions
	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Ensure adequate financial and institutional resources for employment and social policies to more systematically target the young, women and long-term unemployed.

Attention to gender equality

The section on gender equality points at the adoption of the Action Plan on Gender Equality but recalls that the implementing laws related to the Gender Equality Law still need to be adopted. The reference to the blockages to women's participation in politics, mainly related to gender-based discrimination and verbal abuses is welcome, though a more detailed overview of the social, economic, political and cultural barriers hindering women's access to and enjoyment of equal rights and specific recommendations are still missing. The section on LGBTIQI rights refers to the ongoing hate speech, threats and violence targeting this community and the banning of the EuroPride route by the Ministry of Interior allegedly due to security concerns. While organisers went ahead with the march despite the ban and via a shorter route, the report fails to acknowledge the atmosphere of fear created by the statements of some government representatives and echoed in the media, the pressure not to attend the march and the fact that some protestors were assaulted. No progress was made

²² EC Country Report Serbia (2022)

in relation to the draft Law on Same-sex Unions and implementation of hate crime legislation, especially on grounds of sexual orientation, is inadequate.

Inclusion of key statistics

The report is generally lacking sex-disaggregated data and statistics. The number of women in elected positions is included but there is no data on domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, with the exception of trafficking in human beings. The section on gender equality refers to the need to improve the collection of sex-disaggregated data and statistics which are missing in various domains, though this should have been included in Chapter 18 (Statistics). The report should have also indicated that the current Official Statistic Programme 2021-2025 lacks reference to data on gender despite the appeal by women's CSOs to the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Dialogue.²³ It is necessary to include statistics on discrimination in the report, which are foreseen to be collected by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, according to the amendments to the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination.

Attention to sexual and gender-based violence

The section on violence against women in this year's report improved. It refers to the delays in the adoption of the Action Plan and funding related to the Strategy on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the insufficient implementation of the Law against Domestic Violence. While the section does not provide an analysis of the structural inequalities leading to violence against women, it indicates that a more comprehensive response to different forms of gender-based violence, including rape, stalking, sexual harassment and forced marriage is needed. It is also welcome that the report indicates that support services for victims/survivors of violence against women are mainly run by CSOs and operate on a limited budget. The reference to specific forms of gender-based violence faced by women with disabilities is also welcome. The report should mention that the Law on Free Legal Aid does not recognise all survivors of gender-based violence as potential beneficiaries of free legal aid, as indicated also by the CEDAW Report.²⁴ The Law also sets out criteria for providers of legal aid which disregard the decades of expertise of women's CSOs already providing these types of services. Increased attention this year is paid to the issue of trafficking of human beings, noting that Serbia is implementing the Strategy on Trafficking in Human Beings 2017-2022 and that the adoption of the Action Plan is delayed. The reference to the CSO-run shelters providing support to women and girls victims of trafficking and the inclusion on sex-disaggregated data on the victims are welcome. However, human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation of Serbian women who are exploited abroad as well as foreign women who are exploited in Serbia should also be noted. The attention paid to foreign workers subject to labour exploitation in Serbia is also welcome. Close attention should be paid to the revision of the Law on Employment of Foreigners to ensure that it does not pave the way for faster procedure for obtaining work and residence permits without adequate guarantees of protection, increasing the vulnerability of foreign workers to different forms of exploitation and violation of labour rights.

Intersectionality - reference to women subject to multiple discriminations

The section on gender equality recognises that Roma women, older women, poor women, women with different abilities, refugees and internally displaced women face multiple intersecting forms of discrimination. The report also refers to the adoption of the new Strategy and Action Plan on Roma Inclusion. The situation of Roma girls in relation to education, child marriages and domestic violence is addressed. The report also states that Serbia should amend its Family Law, to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of children in the family and prohibit child marriage. Further attention to Roma women and girls as well as other women from vulnerable groups should be paid in Chapter 19 (Employment and Social Policy), Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection). Data on Roma women's participation in the labour market, seasonal work and informal unpaid work, violence against Roma women and early marriages should be collected by the state.

²³ <https://www.womenngo.org.rs/en/news/1696-awc-appeal-regarding-the-proposed-strategy-for-the-development-of-official-statistics-in-the-republic-of-serbia-in-the-period-from-2021-to-2025>

²⁴ [Concluding Observations of the fourth periodic report of Serbia](#), CEDAW, (2019).

Reference to women's rights organisations

The report indicates that Serbia adopted a new Strategy for Creating a Stimulating Environment for the Development of Civil Society 2022-2030. While it recognises that smear campaigns and smear attacks against civil society continue, it should openly condemn the ongoing restriction of civic space, attacks on CSOs and individuals criticizing the authorities and protesting against glorification of war criminals and failure to uphold the freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and association. The report should issue a specific recommendation in this respect highlighting that there can be no EU membership without protection of civic space and rights. It should further stress the importance of meaningful consultations with civil society, including women's CSOs, in the process of Serbia's accession to the EU. This year's report refers to the role of CSOs in providing specialised services to women victims/survivors of violence and it should also highlight their role in providing free legal aid to the most vulnerable, as well as the problems they face when providing this service due to poor application of the Law on Free Legal Aid.

Account of women's roles in peacebuilding, dealing with the past and reconciliation

This year's report refers to the fact that the new Action Plan on WPS has yet to be adopted in the section on violence against women. Next year this reference should be moved to Chapter 31 (Foreign, Security and Defence Policy), in line with the EU GAP III provisions. The section on Good Neighbourly Relations address some of the legacies of the war in the 1990s, including refugees, displaced and missing persons while ignoring the issue of war-time sexual violence. The section on domestic handling of war crimes includes a cursory reference to sexual violence. The section on Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia is gender-blind, despite EU's and Serbia's commitments to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 which foresees the participation of women and integration of a gender perspective in all peace negotiations. The report should highlight that the Law on Missing Babies and the Law on the Rights of the Veterans, Disabled Veterans, Civilian Invalids of War and their Family Members disregard the rights of women survivors of sexual violence. There is also no reference to civil society's ongoing effort to build peace, and women's activism aimed at promoting reconciliation across borders and ethnic communities.

Integration of gender into other chapters/sections

The report refers to the number of women in elected positions, as members of parliament and ministers, but there is no reference to the under-representation of women in local administration. Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) addresses the issue of equality between women and men in employment, highlighting that stereotypes about childcare and household work being a women's responsibility persist. An official recommendation on ensuring adequate employment measures for the young, women and long-term unemployed is included. Chapter 28 (Consumer Health and Protection) includes only a cursory reference to health inequalities and this could be further expanded next year to include reference to SRHR of women and girls. Chapter 26 (Education and Culture) for the first time this year refers to the need to strengthen students' competences on gender equality, reproductive health, sexuality education and prevention and response to gender-based violence, among others. Chapters 27 (Environment and Climate Change), 11 (Agriculture and Rural Development), 31 (Foreign and Security Policy) and sections on Good Neighbourly Relations and Normalisation of Relations with Kosovo should be gender-mainstreamed next.

³¹ See page 41, Alarm Report on the progress of Serbia on Chapter 23 and 24, PrEUgovor (June 2020)

Recommendations for the 2023 Serbia Report:

1. Take a stronger stance on the democratic backsliding in the country which continues unabated including reduced political and civic space, politisation of state institutions, thriving corruption, lack of media freedom, lack of independence of the judiciary, crackdown on journalists and HRDs who take critical stances against the government
2. Call on the government to create an enabling and safe environment for CSOs and HRDs and guarantee the freedom of expression, of assembly and association, prosecute hate speech, verbal attacks and smear campaigns against civic actors, including HRDs
3. Issue a specific recommendation in the fundamental rights section on the protection of rights of LGBTQI persons and minorities, full implementation of Law and Strategy on Non-discrimination, implementation of hate crime legislation and adoption of the Law on Same-sex Unions
4. Include an analysis of factors preventing women's political participation at national and local level coupled with clear recommendations on the implementation of the newly introduced quota of 40% for the least represented gender
5. Closely monitor and report on the revision of the Law on Employment of Foreigners and potential re-introduction of Law on Seasonal Workers to ensure that they do not further endanger workers at risk of labour exploitation and call on the Government to adequately address the issue of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation as well as multiple exploitations, with attention to women and girls
6. Report on all forms of gender-based violence, provision of specialised services for women and their children, and the issue of SRHR and women's health (in Chapter 28), which are increasingly under attack by conservative movements and individuals
7. Include a gender perspective in the description of the outstanding legacies of the 1990s' conflicts, including sex-disaggregated data on refugees, IDPs and missing persons, and victims of war-time sexual violence
8. Integrate the reference to UNSCR 1325 on WPS in Chapter 31 (Foreign and Security Policy) and a gender perspective in the sections on Good Neighbourly Relations and Normalisation of Relations with Kosovo, including in relation to the EU-facilitated dialogue
9. Recommend the inclusion of specific attention to gender and collection of sex-disaggregated data in the Official Statistic Programme 2021-2025
10. Recommend that the new Labour Law be in line with the ILO Conventions and EU Work-Life Balance Directive especially in relation to paternity, maternity and parental leave rights
11. Further attend to the situation of women facing multiple discrimination such as Roma women, women refugees and IDPs, elderly women, women from rural areas, women heads of households including in Chapter 28 (Consumer and Health Protection)

Annex 1 Official recommendations in relation to gender equality and women's rights in the 2022 EC Country Reports		
Country	Chapter	Recommendation in grey box
Albania	Fundamental rights	Implement the national strategy for gender equality, the law on gender equality and ensure gender-mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting for sectoral strategies
	Chapter 28 Consumer and Health Protection	Guarantee equal access to quality health services for vulnerable populations, including Roma and Egyptian minorities, older people, people with pre-existing mental health problems, people with disabilities, rural or remote populations, notably for women and girls belonging to these groups who are often subjected to multiple forms of discrimination
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Introduce a uniform minimum level of maternity leave benefits and protection throughout the country, starting by harmonising the definitions of maternity, paternity and parental leave
Kosovo	Fundamental rights	Strengthen the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, adopt the Law on Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women, continue the efforts to ensure proper functioning of the system of protection, prevention and adjudication on all forms of gender-based violence
	Fight against organised crime	Implement the strategy and action plan against trafficking in human beings 2022-2026, adopting a victim-centered approach
	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Adopt the new Law on Labour in line with relevant EU acquis, in particular in relation to non-discrimination in employment and parental leave
Montenegro	Parliament	The capacity of Parliament to integrate and oversight gender equality issues needs to be enhanced
	Fundamental rights	Revise legislation to: increase protection against domestic violence, discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech; comply with 2018 UN Universal Periodic Review recommendation to prohibit the statute of limitations for criminal offences of torture and other forms of ill treatment; fully harmonise with the 2020 same-sex partnership law; to fully align with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; criminalise all forms of marriage with a person under age 18 and to align protection of personal data

	Fundamental rights	Improve interinstitutional cooperation to achieve more efficient protection from all kinds of discrimination, better access to justice, full enjoyment of procedural rights, and free legal aid for victims of human rights violations and crimes, in particular children, women, persons belonging to minorities, including Roma and Egyptians, and persons with disabilities
	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Reform and strengthen the Employment Agency in order to allow it to play its role as a modern public employment service, designing and implementing quality employment activation measures, ensuring these are targeted, including at young people, women, persons with disabilities, vulnerable persons and minorities, including Roma
	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Monitor implementation of the revised labour law and reinforce staffing in and the institutional structure of the labour inspectorate, also ensuring that issues regarding women, persons with disabilities, minorities including Roma and vulnerable people, are more robustly addressed
	Chapter 25 Science and Research	Increase investments in research and innovation programmes and participation in the Horizon Europe programme, ensuring that this also targets women
North Macedonia	Fundamental Rights	Implement all the provisions on the Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, and allocate necessary resources enabling the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination to become fully functional
	Chapter 19 Social Policy and Employment	Continue to implement activation measures for long-term and low skilled unemployed people, including women, people with disabilities and Roma, and ensure proper monitoring and evaluation of such measures
Serbia	Fundamental rights	Start implementing the strategies on anti-discrimination, gender equality, violence against women and de-institutionalisation; actively counter hate-motivated crimes and establish a track record of investigation and convictions
	Chapter 19	Ensure adequate financial and institutional resources for employment and social policies to more systematically target the young, women and long-term unemployed

**For all women's rights,
in every corner of the world.**