



# 2023 Annual Progress Report

On the implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action  
Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

|               |                                                                          |                 |                                                                                                                   |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AI</b>     | Artificial intelligence                                                  | <b>OSCE</b>     | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe                                                              |
| <b>ATU</b>    | Action against Terrorism Unit                                            | <b>OSR/CTHB</b> | Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings                   |
| <b>BiH</b>    | Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                   | <b>P/CVERLT</b> | Preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism                             |
| <b>CHANGE</b> | Capitalizing on the Human Dimension Mandate to Advance Gender Equality   | <b>PSEA</b>     | Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse                                                                       |
| <b>CPC</b>    | Conflict Prevention Centre                                               | <b>RFoM</b>     | Representative on Freedom of the Media                                                                            |
| <b>CSO</b>    | Civil society organization                                               | <b>SALW</b>     | Small arms and light weapons                                                                                      |
| <b>DEIB</b>   | Diversity Equity Inclusion (with a focus on Belonging)                   | <b>SEA</b>      | Sexual exploitation and abuse                                                                                     |
| <b>DHoM</b>   | Deputy Head of Mission                                                   | <b>SEE</b>      | South-Eastern Europe                                                                                              |
| <b>DHR</b>    | Department of Human Resources                                            | <b>SGBV</b>     | Sexual and gender-based violence                                                                                  |
| <b>DRR</b>    | Disaster risk reduction                                                  | <b>SI</b>       | Staff Instruction                                                                                                 |
| <b>ExB</b>    | Extra-budgetary                                                          | <b>SOP</b>      | Standard operation procedure                                                                                      |
| <b>GAP</b>    | Gender Action Plan                                                       | <b>SPMU</b>     | Special Police Matters Unit                                                                                       |
| <b>GBV</b>    | Gender-based Violence                                                    | <b>TAHCLE</b>   | Training against Hate Crime for Law Enforcement                                                                   |
| <b>GIP</b>    | Gender Issues Programme                                                  | <b>TNTD</b>     | Transnational Threats Department                                                                                  |
| <b>GRB</b>    | Gender-responsive budgeting                                              | <b>TOT</b>      | Training-of-trainers                                                                                              |
| <b>GRL</b>    | Gender-responsive leadership                                             | <b>UB</b>       | Unified Budget                                                                                                    |
| <b>GWG</b>    | Gender working group                                                     | <b>VAW</b>      | Violence against Women                                                                                            |
| <b>HCNM</b>   | High Commissioner on National Minorities                                 | <b>WAVE</b>     | Women Against Violence Europe                                                                                     |
| <b>HoM</b>    | Head of Mission                                                          | <b>WIN</b>      | WIN for Women and Men: Strengthening Comprehensive Security through Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality |
| <b>ICAN</b>   | Network of Women Peacebuilders                                           | <b>WPON</b>     | Serbian Women Police Officers Network                                                                             |
| <b>MP</b>     | Member of Parliament                                                     | <b>WPS</b>      | Women, Peace and Securit                                                                                          |
| <b>OCEEA</b>  | Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities |                 |                                                                                                                   |
| <b>ODIHR</b>  | Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights                      |                 |                                                                                                                   |
| <b>OMiK</b>   | OSCE Mission in Kosovo                                                   |                 |                                                                                                                   |

**Helga Maria Schmid**  
OSCE Secretary General



*No peace without women's rights, no security without gender equality. This was the spirit of the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality adopted by OSCE participating States in 2004 - a landmark document which recognizes that without equal rights for women and girls in political, economic and social life there cannot be peace, stability and security for all.*

As we mark the 20th Anniversary of the Action Plan, we take stock of important progress made across the OSCE in promoting gender equality and in support of women's leadership. Yet, we are facing new challenges ahead, with conflicts still raging and multiplying crises affecting our security—from climate change to corruption, to uneven access to natural resources. We are also facing a significant backtracking on women's rights globally and a significant growth in misogyny. Discrimination is still pervasive and women remain significantly under-represented in peace and security efforts. Today, women and girls are exposed to new forms of violence with spikes in online violence and sexual harassment and abuse. Abhorrent crimes such as rape in conflict contexts as well as trafficking of human beings represent major threats to the wellbeing of women and hinder our collective stability.

We must redouble our efforts to promote gender equality across all three dimensions of security. The OSCE must continue to strive to promote equal rights for a more equitable and stable world and continue to be a global actor in the promotion of gender equality.

This report assesses progress made in 2023 in line with the commitments laid down in the Action Plan. The report shows that OSCE institutions and field operations work hard to bring these commitments to life, to make sure our documents are not just paper tigers. It also highlights some of the many projects implemented thanks to the efforts of OSCE staff and critical backing from participating States.

In 2023, we continued to support Ukrainian women and girls and paid attention to participation in public life and protection matters affecting women and girls across the whole OSCE region. Through the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders that I launched in 2021, we connected women mediators and peacebuilders, and we empowered new generations of women leaders.

With the 16 Days campaign, the OSCE raised awareness of the need to end violence against women, a serious violation of women's rights as well as a threat to security. The OSCE Secretariat's social media posts alone, highlighting the campaign, gained close to a million impressions. Throughout the year, the OSCE also put a spotlight on femicide, including through exchanges of best practices and supporting legislative changes to address prevention and prosecution.

In 2023, we also promoted new insights and approaches. For example, we published an unprecedented report on the role of women in organized crime and presented groundbreaking research on the nexus between gender, corruption and access to natural resources.

Last but not least, we continued promoting gender equality within the Organization. We launched a specific e-learning course on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and established a network of PSEA focal points across the Organization. And we achieved gender parity among international staff at the overall level, with women representing 47 per cent across the entire Organization in 2023.

While the Action Plan was adopted two decades ago, it remains as relevant as ever. There is still a lot that needs to be done for gender equality to become a reality but the OSCE has the tools to continue meeting the many challenges ahead. We can look back at two decades of OSCE expertise and—with the participating States' support—we will continue to make a difference in the lives of women and girls around the world.

**Helga Maria Schmid**  
OSCE Secretary General

## Key successes for 2023



Participants of Young Women for Peace Initiative with OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, Vienna, 8 March 2023. (OSCE)

### Translating the Women, Peace and Security agenda from commitments into actions

In 2023, the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders including Peacebuilders and Mediators launched by OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid acted as a catalyst for implementing the commitments under the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS) by empowering and supporting young peacebuilders and promoting women's inclusion in all peace and security domains.

On 8 March, Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid launched the Young Women for Peace Initiative, a new pillar of the Networking Platform aimed at bringing young women's perspectives on peace and security to the fore.

In 2023, the inaugural cohort of 12 mentees successfully graduated from the first edition of the Women's Peace Leadership Programme (WPLP), a high-level mentoring initiative involving high-level mediators and conflict resolution experts and young peacebuilders from across the OSCE, as well as Afghanistan. The second edition of the one-year programme was also launched, supporting 16 peacebuilders.

Under the Networking Platform, the Secretariat's Gender Issues Programme (GIP) and Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) under the WIN project launched two new regional networks on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation to amplify women's work on combatting violent extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe.

The OSCE established a dedicated platform for women from Ukraine and, in collaboration with Ukrainian civil society partners, supported two retreats for 47 Ukrainian women activists that combined psychosocial support and strategic planning.

*"I value the opportunity to be immersed in spaces like WPLP, where we can pose difficult questions to each other, and share experiences in a safe space with women mediators from different regions and diverse backgrounds. It is so valuable and extremely needed."*

Irma Pidtepa, Ukraine

*"This is one of the key benefits of being part of this programme: knowing that I can tap into the expertise of this incredible network of women leaders and also offer my support should anyone need it."*

Bojana Mumin, Bosnia and Herzegovina

### OSCE pioneering with ground-breaking work on gender equality

In 2023, the TNTD's Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU) published an assessment report, unique in its kind, on the role of women in organized crime. At the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the GIP organized a high-level panel on digital empowerment of women in conflict settings for Ukrainian and Afghan women. And GIP presented groundbreaking research on the nexus between gender, corruption and access to natural resources.

### Tackling all forms of violence against women and girls

Gender-based violence represents a serious violation of women's rights and a threat to OSCE collective security.

In 2023, the OSCE redoubled its efforts to invest in prevention and protection through effective partnership with civil society and international partners. Some of the key initiatives:

RFoM published a set of Guidelines for Monitoring Online Violence against Female Journalists. At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje, North Macedonia, the North Macedonian OSCE Chairman-in-Office issued a Joint Statement with 45 OSCE participating States on the safety of women journalists.

The OSCE's support to local organizations also made a difference in many people's lives across the OSCE area. For example, thanks to the help of Women's Resource Centres supported by the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe, nearly 1,400 survivors of domestic violence in Tajikistan received legal and psychological support and new employment opportunities.

During the 16 Days of Activism, the OSCE raised awareness on the need to end violence against women. On social media, the OSCE Secretariat's posts alone gained close to a million impressions. OSCE Institutions and Field Operations also united around this campaign, running a broad variety of activities.

Throughout the year, the OSCE also put the spotlight on femicide, including through exchanges of best practices and supporting legislative changes to address prevention and prosecution.

## Promoting women's empowerment for a sustainable future

### Women in sustainable energy

The Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) launched a fully funded scholarship programme in collaboration with the Kazakh-German University to help young Central Asian, Afghan and Mongolian women kick-start their careers in the sustainable energy sector. As part of the same project, the OSCE concluded the inaugural edition of its first mentoring programme for 30 Central Asian women in the energy sector. Among its activities, the programme facilitated access to investors, enabling participants to leverage international funding to initiate new renewable energy projects in the region.

## Participation of national minorities in social and economic life

A new set of recommendations published by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) in 2023 focuses on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Social and Economic Life, offering practical tools to participating States and policymakers to facilitate social and economic participation at different levels and across various areas. They explicitly focus on the situation of women.

## Eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life

### Fostering a gender-sensitive approach to lawmaking

ODIHR published Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws. The new Guidelines offer a new, comprehensive toolkit for policy- and lawmakers, providing

concrete and practical recommendations on how to engage in regulatory reform to develop good-quality laws that are gender-responsive, diversity-sensitive and non-discriminatory in both content and practice.

### Engaging men in the promotion of gender equality

With support of the WIN and CHANGE flagship projects, the OSCE organized an innovative two-day conference entitled *Women and Men: Working together for equal rights*, bringing together 75 representatives of democratic institutions and religious communities, human rights defenders, members of academia, experts and practitioners to discuss successful approaches, lessons learned and new initiatives to engage men in promoting gender equality. In 2023, the Secretariat-based Men for Gender Equality (*MenEngage*) also continued to meet and reached out to the like-minded in Vienna and beyond.

## Fostering a safe and inclusive working environment

### Establishing a workplace free from gender-based violence

Following the adoption in 2022 of Staff Instruction (SI) 32 on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, the Organization launched an OSCE-specific Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) e-learning course and established a network of PSEA focal points.

### Promoting gender parity

The Organization achieved gender parity among international staff, with women representing 47 per cent of all international staff. This can probably be credited to continued outreach efforts undertaken by the OSCE, as well as the special attention given to gender parity at every step of the Organization's recruitment process. For the first time, more women than men were deployed in ODIHR's election observation activities for both analyst positions and mission management.

OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid with mentors and mentees and WIN project donors at the closing ceremony of the first OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Programme, Vienna, 9 October 2023. (OSCE/Micky Kroell)



# The way forward

## As the world's largest regional security organization, the OSCE remains a key global player in advancing gender equality and promoting women's rights across its 57 participating States and beyond.

This role is more critical today than ever. In an era of emerging and recurrent conflicts and intersecting crises—from climate change to food and energy insecurity, violence against women and girls, and pervasive discrimination—it is fundamental that gender equality remains firmly at the core of all OSCE policies and actions for achieving comprehensive security. Effective gender mainstreaming in all OSCE activities and initiatives and continued and sustainable partnerships with international and civil society partners continues to be paramount to meet future challenges.

### Rethinking the Women, Peace and Security agenda to better respond to threat multipliers and global intersecting crises.

To better respond to threat multipliers and emerging issues, such as cyber-crime, climate change and mismanagement of natural resources, it is essential to recentre the WPS agenda and the National Action Plans, and to promote women's inclusion in all decision-making processes, including climate actions. Building on existing activities and networking platforms, the OSCE will actively work to enhance women's participation in decision-making related to natural resource management and climate change, as well as gender-responsive disaster risk reduction policies, and contribute to the implementation of Minister Council Decision No. 03/21 on Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change. An engaged civil society is key to inform on the impact of intersecting crises on women, as

well as to ensure the full implementation of relevant OSCE commitments. The OSCE will capitalize on its mandate to continue providing platforms for women civil society actors to discuss the role of women in strengthening peace and security and their human rights.

**Leveraging the power of networks to promote women's leadership and inclusion in all peace and security efforts.** Women's networks represent a powerful tool to support women's leadership in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Continued investment in the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders, including peacebuilders and mediators, as well as other local and regional networks, will remain essential to respond effectively to the impact of conflict and crises, and support women's critical role in peace and security.

### Investing in youth for gender equality.

Young women represent the future of peacebuilding. In the year marking the 25th anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, there is a need to rethink the WPS agenda to address all intersecting crises, including the impact of investing in preparing the next generation of women leaders across all spectrums of policies and to promote effective intergenerational exchanges, including through dedicated mentoring programmes and capacity-building activities.

### Eliminating all barriers to women's economic empowerment.

Corruption, mismanagement of natural resources, unpaid care work and unequal access to financial services continue to restrain women's full economic potential. Gender-responsive measures are needed to unlock these opportunities and remove all obstacles women currently face on the path towards economic independence, for the benefit of society as a whole.

### Enhancing women's political participation and transforming democratic institutions to deliver for gender equality.

Despite some progress, women continue to be underrepresented in parliaments and leadership positions across the OSCE region. Increasing the representation of women in political and public life, and making democratic institutions, including parliaments and political parties, more gender-responsive, will enable them to deliver for gender equality and for inclusive democracies. This requires accelerated efforts of gender-responsive lawmaking, policies and practices, including by actively promoting women's participation in electoral processes and preventing violence against women in politics.

### Countering online violence while maximizing digital opportunities.

Digitalization brings huge opportunities to empower women, including in conflict-affected countries, but can pose significant

threats exposing them to online violence, sexual harassment and abuse, and a heightened risk of trafficking. There is also increasing evidence of a correlation—and even a causal relationship—between online threats against women and offline attacks, indicating that gender-based online violence could be a predictor of physical violence. Thus, leveraging the power of technology while ensuring gender-responsive policies, and taking measures to protect women, remain essential.

### Engaging men for gender equality.

Men represent critical allies in ending discrimination, promoting equal rights across the OSCE and supporting women's equal access to political, social and economic life. Building on the important initiatives already launched by its institutions and field operations, the OSCE must continue investing in education and the engagement of men and boys in the promotion of gender equality.

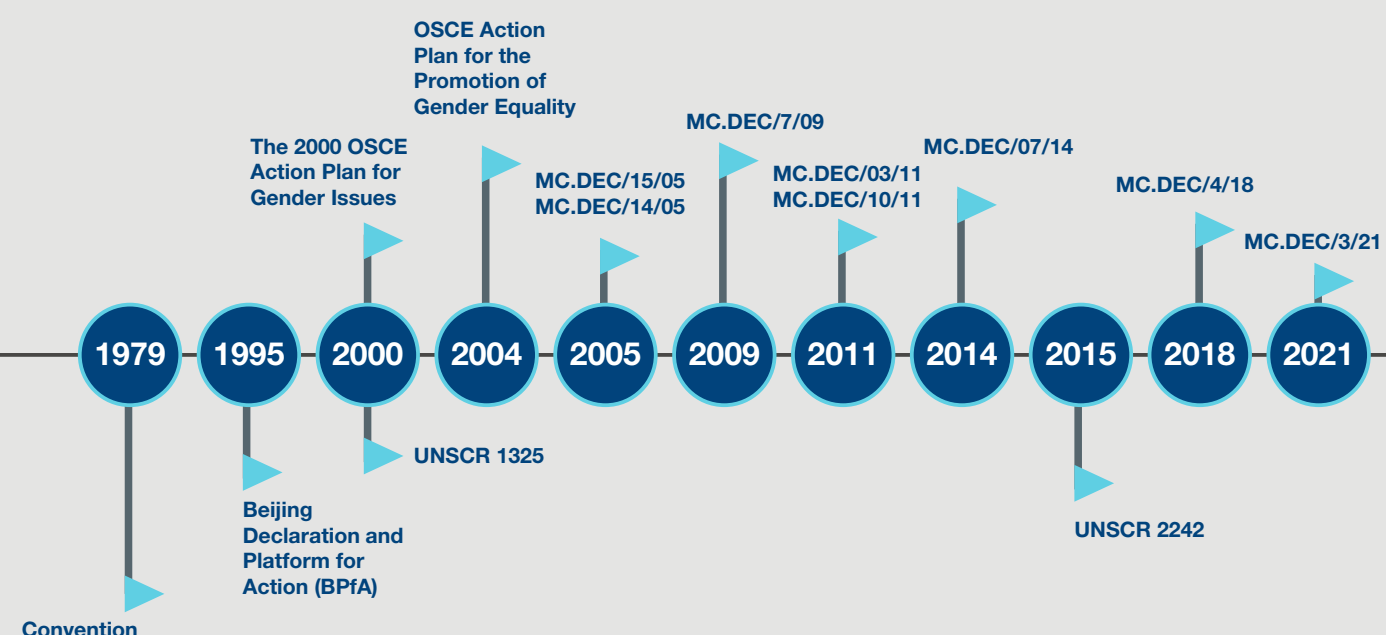
**Taking an intersectional approach to gender equality.** Gender intersects with other factors, such as ethnicity, age and disability, creating specific power dynamics and needs. Interventions should be designed to reflect these factors.

**Continuing to lead by example** through the promotion of gender parity at all levels and implementing all policies for a professional working environment at the OSCE, including those promoting life-work balance. While gender parity was successfully reached in 2023 among international staff at the overall level, this needs to continue being the standard. Also, more needs to be done to ensure that more women are seconded to senior management positions. Participating States are strongly encouraged to put forward more qualified women candidates for seconded positions.

# Introduction

The OSCE's 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (GAP) underscores the right of women to fully exercise their human rights and the links between gender equality and comprehensive security.

It also calls on the OSCE Secretary General, as well as the heads of the Organization's institutions and field operations, to develop plans to implement the commitments made in the GAP. Several other international declarations provide further context for the promotion of gender equality, including the Women, Peace and Security agenda and related UN Security Council resolutions (see also timeline below).



Timeline of OSCE Ministerial Council Decisions and UN resolutions (Evaluation team, Office of Internal Oversight, OSCE Secretariat).

In the past 20 years, the GAP has guided the OSCE's efforts to advance gender equality and women's rights across the whole spectrum of policies and actions. In line with the GAP, the Organization adopted several follow-up decisions that further reiterate its gender-related commitments and guide its programmatic work. This report provides an assessment of progress made in 2023 in implementing the GAP.

The geo-political and other challenges of previous years have left their mark on the Organization and the participating States. While the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have slowly receded, conflicts and crises continued to have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, pushing the situation of women in conflict and post-conflict settings as well as human trafficking and conflict-related sexual violence on top of the agenda

of the OSCE's gender-related activities. Multiple intersecting crises such as climate change, energy insecurity and the uneven access to natural resources posed additional challenges to women and girls. Moreover, despite the advances made in promoting women's rights and equal opportunities, gaps remain especially in achieving full and equal participation of women in political and social life, as well as their economic empowerment. Gender-based violence, especially domestic violence, continued to be a major challenge in OSCE participating States, with spikes in the number of cases of femicide, as well as online violence.

In the face of these multifaced and complex challenges, the OSCE significantly intensified its efforts to promote gender equality in 2023, working in close partnership with many civil society and international partners. Significant steps were taken to prevent and fight all forms of gender-based violence, supporting participating States with the creation of the legal framework and institutions to promote women's rights, as well as investing extensively in women's leadership in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. This whole-of-society approach has proven to be effective in positioning the OSCE as a key international player in the promotion of women's rights and gender equality, and mobilizing regional and indeed global responses to address the multifaced challenges and intersecting crises affecting gender equality. It also allowed for the building up of women's networks as well as of knowledge-sharing and best practices among participating States and stakeholders, collaborative thinking and action, and the strategic action that is needed to bring gender equality to the next level.

This report shows that, despite the global challenges in the promotion of gender equality, the Organization continued to deliver extensively on its mandate to implement the GAP. It highlights some of the most important advances made as a result

of the OSCE's activities and showcases what impact they had in promoting women's rights on the political, institutional and social level. Finally, it brings to the fore key innovations and transformative approaches that support women's leadership across all spectrums of policies and actions, including young women, women from ethnic and national minorities, and women with disabilities, underlining the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

# Chapter 1



## Promoting gender equality in the OSCE

A central commitment of the GAP is to increase gender parity in the OSCE, at all staff levels. It also calls for measures to improve the working environment, ethical standards and accountability of the Organization, and the set-up of clearly defined mechanisms to advance gender mainstreaming into the OSCE’s programmatic activities. In 2023, the Organization made significant progress on gender parity, awareness of safeguarding responsibilities, and assuring accountability for the promotion of gender equality at senior management level.

### 1.1 Progress towards gender parity

Committed to promoting a professional, inclusive, equitable and safe work environment, the Secretariat’s 2019 Gender Parity Strategy aims to achieve gender parity across all staff categories by 2026. This goal continued to be a key priority for the Organization in 2023.

Over time, the implementation of this Strategy has resulted in a steady and significant increase in women across all employment categories. The marked rise in gender parity, especially in senior management positions, can be attributed to an increased percentage of women applying for international contracted positions, representing 48 per cent in 2023.

Women also comprised 47 per cent of all secondees in 2023—a notable increase from 34 per cent in 2022. However, women only constituted 21 per cent of such nominations to senior management positions in 2023. Despite this, the number of women seconded to senior management fixed-term positions (S-4, Deputy Head of Mission, Head of Mission) increased slightly from 27 per cent in 2022 to 28 per cent in 2023, which can be attributed to the low, albeit improving, nomination rates by participating

States as they progressively recognize the relevant role they play in advancing more women candidates for seconded positions.

In 2023, the OSCE achieved gender parity among international staff at the overall level, with women representing 47 per cent across the entire Organization. One explanation for this positive result may be the continued outreach efforts undertaken by the OSCE, as well as the special attention given to gender parity at every step of the recruitment process.

In the OSCE institutions and the Secretariat, women were appointed to one third of all senior management positions, and more than 40 per cent to positions on P-4 level.

For the first time, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights’ (ODIHR) election observation activities deployed more women than men in both analyst positions and mission management. For externally recruited core team positions, ODIHR deployed 57 women and 52 men, including nine women and eight men as heads of mission, or team leaders in smaller activities, and eight women and six men as deputy heads of mission. Similarly, over half of the long-term observers from the ODIHR Diversification Fund were women in 2023.

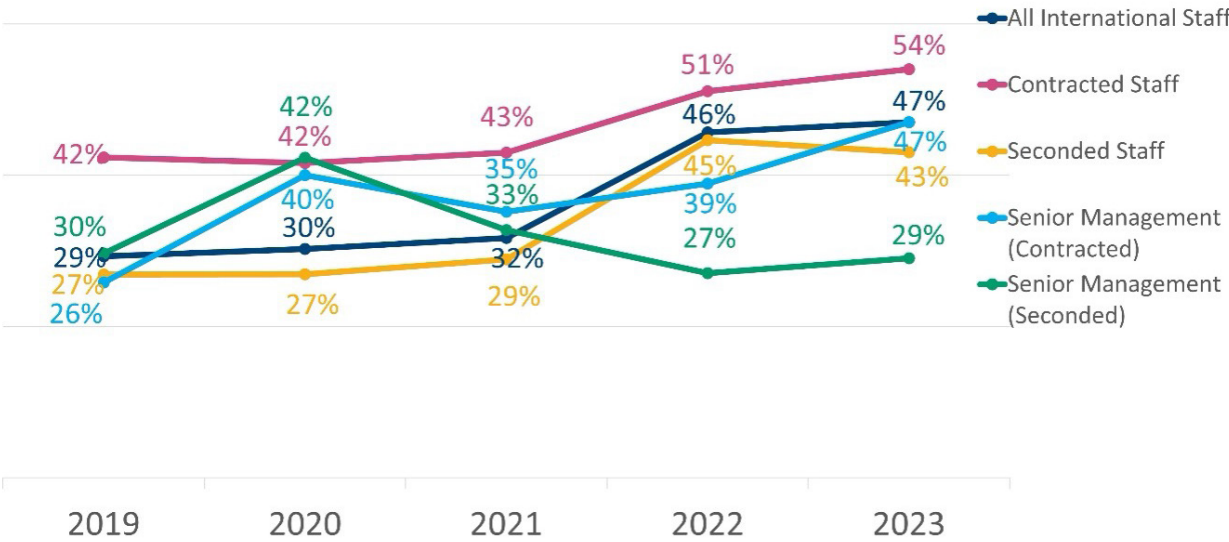


Table 1: Share of women in the different staff categories in the last five years  
Source: Department of Human Resources

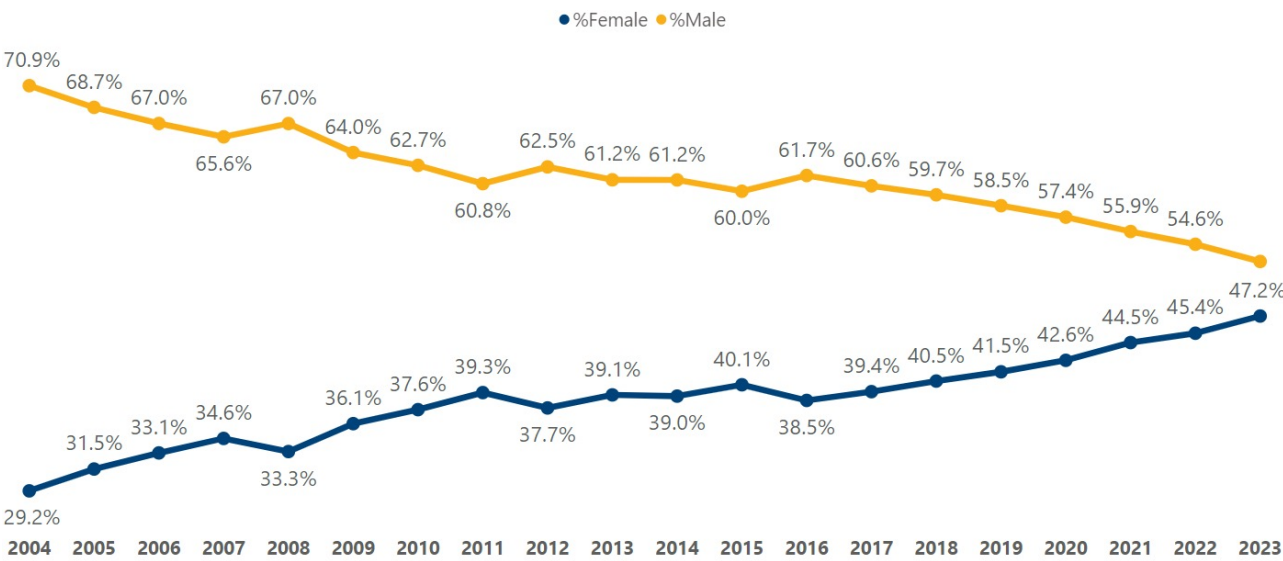


Table 2: Trend and share of all international staff by gender in the last 20 years, excl. the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) and Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU)  
Source: Department of Human Resources

## 1.2 Recruitment practices

Throughout 2023, women made up 50 per cent of applicants for all staffing categories. There was a noticeable increase in the number of women applicants for seconded positions (representing a 14 per cent increase, see Table 1). This most likely was a result from dedicated outreach efforts, tapping into networks of women for specific positions, and regular awareness-raising with participating States on the importance of gender balance.

The Department of Human Resources (DHR), in collaboration with the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, and with funding from Italy and Austria, ran the second Talent Acquisition Programme for enhancing the ability of candidates from non-and lesser represented participating States to be successful in the OSCE recruitment process, with specific modules on searching for vacancies, preparing job applications and preparing for pre-recorded and competency-based interviews. Of the 11 participants, six were women and five were men.

DHR also continued to ensure that vacancy notices were equally appealing to men and women. Requirements deemed unnecessary and discouraging to women applicants were eliminated. Taleo (the talent acquisition and management software used by the OSCE) tracked the gender composition at each stage of the recruitment process, which was shared with the hiring manager and eventually the appointing authority to provide an analytical context of departmental gender and geographical balance. In case of gender imbalance, candidates from the underrepresented gender were encouraged to apply.

Deadlines were extended when a minimum of 20 per cent of applicants of one gender had not been reached. LinkedIn posts included pictures of both men and women, and recruitment panels were staffed, where possible, with employees who had

received relevant training, i.e., on countering unconscious bias.

Senior management recruitments also included an assessment on diversity and inclusion, with a sub-component on gender mainstreaming. Additionally, with the information gathered through HR Analytics (Power BI), a Staff Composition Report was provided to the Secretary General, along with the Selection Report, to better take the achievement of gender parity into consideration when deciding on the candidate to be selected.

In the field, the field operations in South-Eastern Europe reported the most gender-relevant changes in staffing levels in 2023. The Mission to Skopje noted a 40 per cent increase of women in senior positions compared to 2022, when all its five senior-level positions were occupied by men. In 2023, two women were recruited to fill the positions of Deputy Head of Mission and of Chief of Fund Administration. In contrast, gender representation among staff on S-3 level dropped to 20 per cent.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) reported a slight decrease from 2022 to 2023 in the percentage of women recruited to senior-level positions. While 39.5 per cent (15) of the 38 management positions were held by women in 2022, only 36.1 per cent (13) of a total of 36 of such positions were held by women in the following year. OMiK reported that 55.1 per cent of seconded positions were filled by women, while they only represented 25 per cent of professional-level positions. Out of 36 newly recruited staff that joined the Mission in 2023 (both international and local), 41.7 per cent (15) were women. Gender parity levels on interview panels for international positions were 55.2 per cent female and 44.8 per cent male panel members, while for national positions, this ratio was 55 per cent versus 45 per cent. In Albania, the Presence recruited two women to senior level positions, while in Serbia the Mission

recruited one woman to a senior level position (Deputy Head of Mission).

The Mission to Moldova reported one woman recruited to a senior-level position. The Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan achieved gender parity in its senior management in 2023 following the hiring of a female senior manager to the position of Head of Economic-Environmental Programme. The Programme Office in Bishkek recruited a female Deputy Head in 2023, with a reported increase in the number of women recruited at senior level compared to 2022. In Ukraine, under the extra-budgetary Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU), the OSCE recruited five women to senior level positions, three on P-level and two on S-level. The number of men recruited in the same period was four on P- and on S-level, respectively.

ODIHR ran five recruitment processes for senior posts (P-4 or higher) in 2023, which resulted in three women and two men being selected. Two out of the five candidates were hired subsequently. Due to the higher number of recruitments in 2023 compared to 2022, the percentage of hired women, however, went down from 100 to 60 per cent. A female seconded Senior Adviser joined the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) in 2023 and a female internal candidate was recruited as a contracted adviser on a P-3 position. While the recruitment of women decreased in 2023 compared to 2022 at RFoM, the overall number of female staff members remained higher, with 15 women versus six men in management positions at the institution.

At the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), the number of women in senior positions increased by two thanks to the internal promotion of two females staff members.

In the Secretariat, a female Senior Adviser (S/P-4 level) was seconded to the Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) in 2023, and a female Head of the TNTD Border Security and Management Unit was

selected. The female Deputy Head of the Special Police Matters Unit (SPMU)/Adviser on Cybercrime (P-4 level) took up her post in early 2023, while at the Department of Management and Finance, the Department's Mission Support Services recruited a female Chief of Procurement and Contracting Unit (P-4 level), as well as a female P-2 and G-6 level staff member to bring more gender balance to their teams. The Information and Communication Technology Services recruited a female G-6 Senior Software Assistant and a female P-2 Associate Software Development Officer.

# Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

START



## 1.3 Leadership and people management

In 2023, utilizing the flexibility afforded by Staff Instruction No. 27/Rev2 on Flexible Working Arrangements, on average, more female OSCE staff/mission members availed themselves of teleworking across all OSCE Executive Structures when compared to male staff/mission members across the OSCE (see table below).

Additionally, through the use of the new human resource analytics function, information gained from these statistics could help identify issues, such as whether gender-based proximity bias was present due to more male office presence and women wanting to work, or working, from home or

an alternative worksite. Data and analytics can further highlight such trends in the OSCE, what can be ascertained from these trends, and even support in deducing why they exist and what can be done to mitigate the negative effects or perceptions.

## 1.4 Standards of conduct, ethics and professional working environment

The OSCE continued to work on creating a safe, equitable and inclusive professional working environment. Following the adoption of Staff Instruction (SI) 32 on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in 2022, the Organization launched a specific e-learning course on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in 2023

that was specifically designed to address the OSCE's needs, especially in terms of accountability and the Organization's legal obligations. The course, developed by the Gender Issues Programme (GIP) together with DHR and the Ethics Co-ordinator, aims at enabling learners to apply the OSCE's PSEA and safeguarding standards in all the Organization's activities. Prior to the development of this course, and to provide the necessary learning materials to all staff and mission members at the earliest possible opportunity, the OSCE utilized the United Nations training programmes on PSEA.

DHR also co-ordinated the establishment of a network of PSEA focal points across the Organization. A minimum of two PSEA focal points—one male and one female—were appointed among fixed-term officials in each OSCE Executive Structure, totalling 33 dedicated PSEA focal points across the Organization. Their responsibilities include serving as one of the reporting channels for receiving sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) complaints, actively contributing to PSEA awareness campaigns, and ensuring that all materials related to SEA complaints are treated with the utmost confidentiality.

In September, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB), the GIP and the Organization's Senior Psychologist, DHR hosted a dedicated workshop for the newly appointed PSEA focal points in Vienna. This workshop served as an important platform to equip the PSEA focal points with the necessary knowledge and tools essential for fulfilling their roles effectively. DHR also changed existing templates and forms to ensure compliance with the provisions of the new SI 32, including new forms that require candidates to disclose whether they have been subject to disciplinary measures related to SEA or if they were separated from a position while under investigation for SEA. Lastly, DHR amended the OSCE's standard contractual arrangements, such

as the General Conditions of Contract for both Goods and Services and the standard Implementing Partner Agreement, which now include clauses requiring contractors to take appropriate measures to prevent and address SEA by their employees or any individuals engaged to provide services to the OSCE.

|                                               | OVERALL | SECRETARIAT |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Number of men that used teleworking in 2023   | 674     | 184         |
| Active men in this period                     | 1,267   | 243         |
| In percent                                    | 53%     | 76%         |
| Number of women that used teleworking in 2023 | 995     | 252         |
| Active women in this period                   | 1,255   | 305         |
| In percent                                    | 79%     | 83%         |

Table 3 Teleworking across the OSCE

1.5 Internal mechanisms for advancing gender equality and mainstreaming

The OSCE employs several mechanisms and tools to effectively mainstream gender into its work. This comprises action plans, working groups, toolkits, guidance material and training courses.

Different OSCE Executive Structures, institutions and field operations have adopted individual work plans to serve as internal roadmaps for advancing gender equality.

The OSCE has appointed Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in field operations and institutions, as well as in the different departments of the Organization's Secretariat. GFPs provide strategic advice to management and support their colleagues in their gender mainstreaming efforts and therefore play a key role in the promotion of gender equality across the OSCE. At the end of 2023, out of 122 (main and alternate) GFPs, 26 per cent were men. Many GFPs worked in the human dimension or on cross-dimensional issues. The network also

included various staff in senior positions (S-4/P-5 levels and above) serving as main and alternate GFPs.

To further strengthen the role of GFPs, in 2023 the GIP under the WIN project prepared 18 trainers (16 women, 2 men) from Central Asia to conduct transformative training courses on gender equality as part of the WIN Academy, using 12 cutting-edge, tailor-made training modules. The courses were developed specifically for the OSCE context and represent a new, transformative approach to gender equality training. To date, the trainers from Central Asia, together with previous Training-of-trainers (ToT) participants, represent a pool of 60 trainers. Moreover, the GIP continued to convene bi-annual strategic exchanges with GFPs that focused on the sharing of experiences and best practices.

The Secretariat-based Men for Gender Equality group (MenEngage) in 2023 continued to actively meet and reached out to the like-minded in Vienna and beyond. In June, a representative joined the regional conference Parliaments Advance Gender

Equality, hosted by the OSCE Mission to Skopje, as a speaker. The speech focused on gender equality, male allyship and gender representation, which fostered a dialogue with parliamentarians from North Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo\*, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina on these topics, and on how they could play a role in creating more inclusive institutions and structures in their respective governmental bodies. Another representative participated in an event organized by the OSCE WIN and CHANGE projects in Warsaw in December, which also contributed to identifying new ways on how to engage men in working towards gender equality.

Of the 111 new/draft ExB project proposals received by CPC/PESU for review by

the Network of Technical Focal Points (NTFPs) in 2023, 82 proposals indicated a Gender Marker (this excludes, e.g., ICC projects, repository programmes, and other administrative projects not indicating any Gender Marker).

In 2023, the majority of received and assessed project proposals with a Gender Marker had a G2 score (46.4%, 38 projects), followed by a G1 score (42.7%, 35 projects) and a G3 score (8.5%, 7 projects).

\*All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.



Lyazzat Ramazanova, Deputy Chair of the National Commission on Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Dr. Volker Frobarth, Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana addressing the participants of the conference on Promoting Women's Participation in Law Enforcement in Central Asia, Astana, 14 - 15 September 2023. (OSCE)

Gender mainstreaming Levels across all projects (ExB 2018-2023)

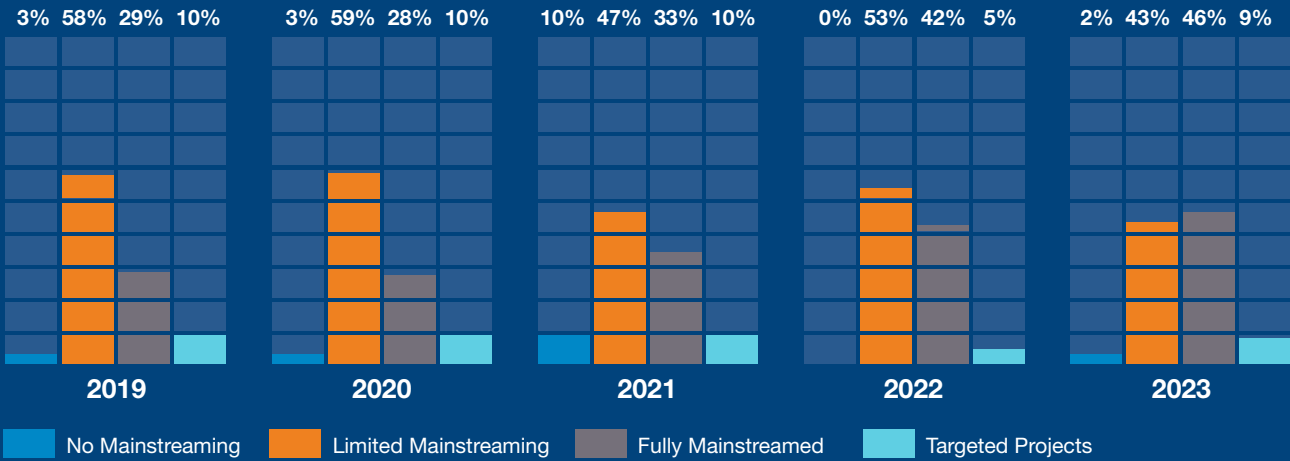


Table 4: Gender Mainstreaming levels across all projects (ExB 2018–2023)

<sup>1</sup> The total number of active ExB projects as of 31 October 2023 was 209.  
<sup>2</sup> Please note that these statistics reflect the Gender Marker of the ExB projects at the time they were received by CPC/PESU for review by the NTFPs, i.e. they do not reflect changes to the Gender Marker that might have been introduced following later amendments to the project design.

## Chapter 2



### Promoting gender equality in participating States

To promote gender equality in the OSCE participating States, the GAP stipulates the application of gender mainstreaming through all substantive lines of work. This includes to foster non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks; to prevent and combat violence against women and girls; to ensure that women have equal opportunities to participate in political and public life; to encourage their participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction; and to promote that they have access to equal economic opportunities.

#### 2.1 Ensuring non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks

Working with government authorities at national and local level, the OSCE helps develop and strengthen laws and policies to combat discrimination and ensure that gender equality is achieved both legally and de facto.

The GAP benefits from ODIHR's legislative review mandate, enabling the Office to analyse the potential impact legislative initiatives can have on women and men. In 2023, 27 of 35 such legal reviews provided concrete recommendations to the laws' drafters. ODIHR also made recommendations to two OSCE participating States on how to undertake regulatory reforms to contribute to a more gender-sensitive lawmaking process. ODIHR also published a practical tool for stakeholders who engage with justice systems, the [Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#).

The Mission to Serbia, together with ODIHR, delivered an intensive three-day course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming

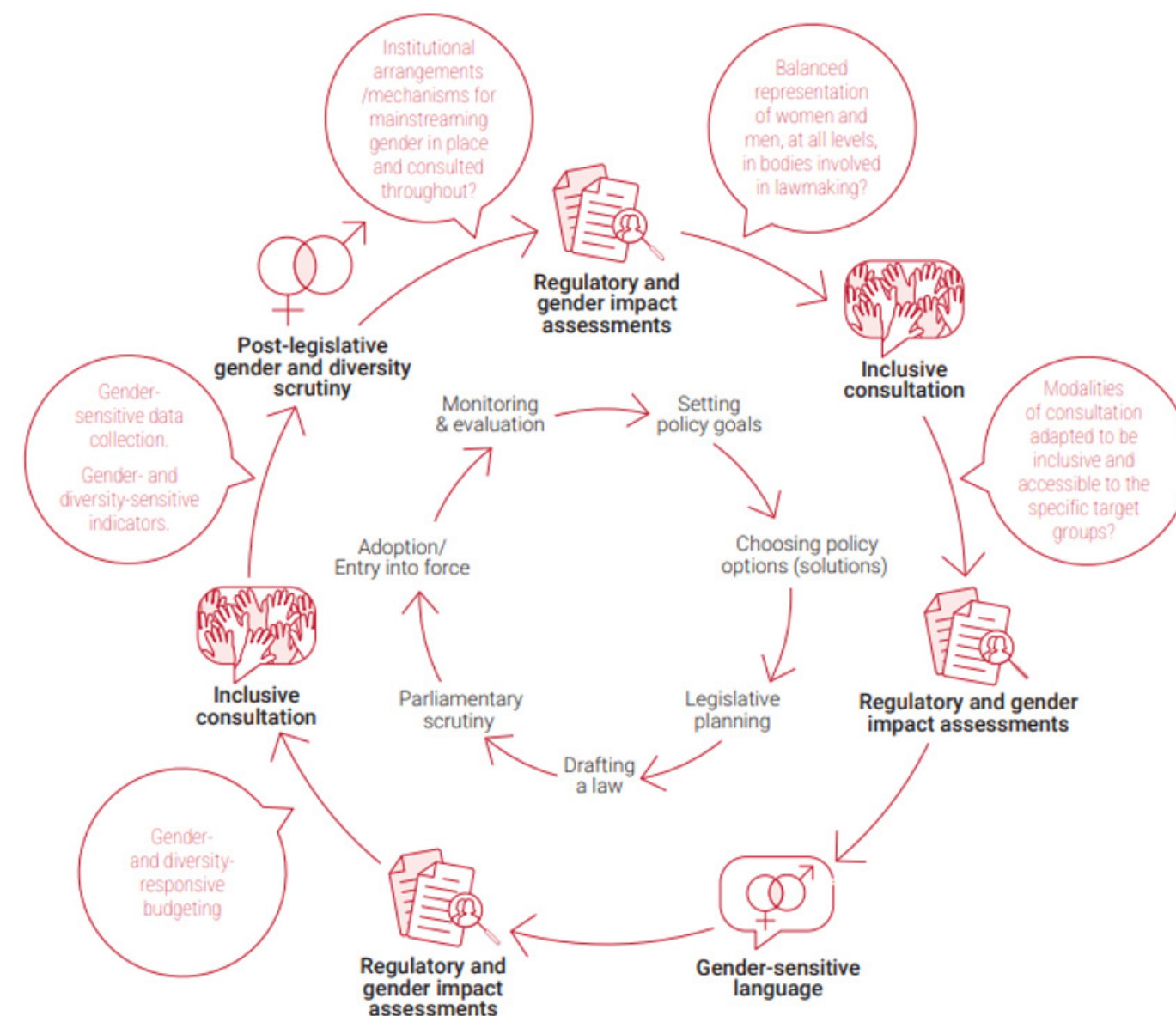
for the country's National Assembly to raise awareness on international standards, good practices and challenges in integrating a gender equality perspective. The Mission also supported the implementation of gender-sensitive language, one of the novelties in the 2021 Law on Gender Equality. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the Mission's efforts resulted in the integration of victims of domestic violence and trafficking in the country's amended Social Housing Laws. The Programme Office in Dushanbe supported the Human Rights Committee with the implementation of the Equality Law.

In Ukraine, the SPU held a series of training sessions on gender equality and non-discrimination for National School of Judges and Supreme Court trainers. Sixty judges from first instance courts, appeal courts and the Supreme Court were trained on identifying gender-sensitive cases, reviewing sexual violence crimes (including wartime atrocities) and applying relevant European Court of Human Rights practices.

## A gender-responsive approach to lawmaking

### New ODIHR Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws

Figure 2. Mainstreaming gender and diversity throughout the legislative cycle



A gender-responsive approach to law-making

A [new toolkit developed by ODIHR](#) provides policy- and lawmakers with recommendations on how to develop laws that are gender-responsive, diversity-sensitive and non-discriminatory, in both content and practice. The guidelines view the legislative process as a cycle, with entry points for mainstreaming gender and diversity at each stage of the legislative process, from policy setting, impact assessment, public consultations and discussion, law drafting, parliamentary scrutiny to adoption, publication, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The Programme Office in Bishkek and ODIHR presented results of a gender participatory assessment of the Kyrgyz parliament, initiated in 2022 by ODIHR at the request of the parliament and aimed to evaluate the gender sensitivity of parliamentary practices. The Programme Office also supported through an expert the Council on the Rights of Women, Children, and Gender Equality, established under the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, facilitating meetings between the Council members and civil society organizations to address such issues as enhancing women's representation in elected bodies, combating gender-based violence and addressing child abuse.

## 2.2 Preventing and combating violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls is both a cause and a consequence of deeply entrenched gender inequalities. The OSCE's engagement on combating violence against women and girls takes diverse forms across various sectors: building the capacity of relevant actors, ensuring effective interagency co-ordination, supporting the development of local and national policies and response mechanisms, conducting awareness-raising campaigns and applying intersectional approaches, including involving youth.

A considerable number of activities in 2023 focused on the nexus of domestic violence and gender-based violence (GBV), and the OSCE's work across its region focused both on the prevention and the protection measures for survivors of violence. Several important steps were taken in support of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and the penitentiary system.

Regarding police training, TNTD/SPMU delivered national training courses on gender-sensitive and victim-centred responses to GBV to police and prosecutors in Albania, BiH, North Macedonia,

Montenegro and Serbia, using the curriculum developed by the OSCE. OMiK trained the police on risk assessment, safety planning and case management, focusing on the protection of domestic violence victims Kosovo-wide. In BiH, the Mission, together with the Federation of BiH and Cantonal Ministries of Interior, issued new guidance for actions of police officers in response to cases of domestic violence and a policy for institutionalizing mandatory training programmes for the police on the standardized response to domestic violence. In Tajikistan, the Programme Office in Dushanbe ran a ToT course for 20 police officers (12 women, eight men) that had a special focus on the gender-sensitive handling of domestic violence cases. As a result, the number of cases referred from the police to other responsible entities increased from 1,020 in 2022 to 2,034 in 2023.

The Programme Office in Bishkek also held a two-day ToT course for members of the police force in Kyrgyzstan, together with the Kyrgyz Association of Women in the Security Sector, as well as information sessions on the rights, duties and responsibilities of minors in the context of the prevention of transnational threats and of domestic violence, which took place in 20 schools across all the country's seven provinces and reached over 2,800 high-school pupils (1,680 girls, 1,120 boys) and 100 teachers and parents (80 women, 20 men). The Programme Office in Bishkek also continued its support to build the capacities of the Women Initiatives Group network, with the goal to better address GBV and promote gender equality principles and non-discrimination at the local level.

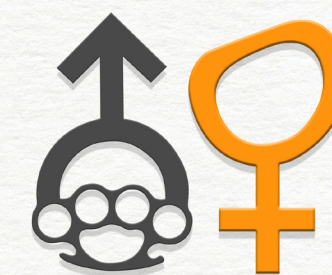
To improve the institutional response to cases of violence against women, the Mission to Montenegro and the country's Supreme Court hosted a workshop that simulated the criminal procedure in respect of charges based on serious allegations of gender-based violence, specifically rape and femicide. The Mission to Serbia, in co-operation with the U.S. Department of

Justice, organized a Judicial Forum at which approximately 40 judges, prosecutors and attorneys (29 women, 11 men) discussed challenges of applying the country's Law on Domestic Violence and how to improve its implementation. A ToT in Ukraine, held by the SPU for staff of the country's Free Legal Aid system, addressed gender equality and GBV as part of its efforts to support Ukraine's Legal Road Map on combating sexual violence.

Focusing on officials working for prisons and correctional facilities, ODIHR ran capacity-building sessions on preventing and addressing gender-based violence in places of deprivation of liberty and, in parallel, continued to train National Human Rights Institutions and National Preventive Mechanisms on including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) issues in detention monitoring.

In North Macedonia, ODIHR worked with men and women from religious and traditional communities on ways to address violence against women through joint messages by religious leaders to support changes in societal attitudes. The Programme Office in Bishkek also engaged confessional groups through discussions on gender-sensitive issues with stakeholders at the municipal level.

GIP under the WIN programme launched in 2023 a new partnership with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Office of Europe and Central Asia to conduct a joint mapping of perpetrator programmes in Central Asia. Moreover, under the WIN project, GIP continued to support women's organizations active in the field of GBV through targeted regional activities to foster sharing of best practices among NGOs.



Tajikistan campaign poster "When a man beats, this does not mean he loves. Love is about life, not violence."

## Increased support for multi-sectoral services to survivors

Nearly all the field operations in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia made efforts to provide comprehensive support to survivors of GBV in 2023. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, shaken by a series of femicides in past years, the Mission increased its engagement on GBV, initiating a comprehensive dialogue in the country to combat this crime (see sidebar). In Kosovo, a key role in the co-ordination of local response and prevention mechanisms is played by [Municipal Co-ordination Mechanisms against Domestic Violence \(MCMDVs\)](#). Twenty-four of the existing 37 MCMDVs were established with direct OSCE support. OMiK also developed [Guidelines for Effective Performance of these mechanisms](#), a key tool in helping MCMDV members standardize their roles across Kosovo. In Skopje, the Mission trained police officers on advanced techniques to interview victims and take their statements, enhancing their skills in handling domestic violence and GBV cases effectively and with sensitivity. The Mission to Montenegro supported a local NGO, the SOS helpline Nikšić, to run a pilot microgreen farming programme that improved the delivery of occupational therapy within



OSCE Mission to BiH initiates Comprehensive Dialogue to Combat Gender-Based Violence, Sarajevo, 29 August 2023. (OSCE)

shelters and created tangible opportunities for survivors of violence to achieve economic empowerment. TNTD/SPMU organized four national round tables in South-Eastern Europe, which brought together media, law enforcement practitioners, prosecutors, judges, and government and civil society representatives to discuss how to foster gender-sensitive and victim-centred media reporting of GBV.

In Central Asia, Women's Resources Centres supported by the Programme Office in Dushanbe provided direct assistance to 1,340 survivors of domestic violence (1,233 women, 107 men) in Tajikistan, and held legal consultations for 4,005 (3,724 women, 281 men) and psycho-social ones for 3,621 (3,360 women, 261 men) survivors. They also organized weekly community awareness-raising sessions, reaching 16,586 people (12,060 women, 4,526 men). In Kazakhstan, crisis centre premises and staff lately were the target of attacks against them. The Programme Office in Astana responded to this by providing safety equipment for crisis centres in North, South, Almaty and Akmola regions. The

Office also put together a series of manuals specifically tailored to the needs of persons with disabilities (PwD), a valuable resource for professionals containing practical guidance on how to apply victim-centred approaches and provide immediate assistance and referrals to survivors of SGBV.

### Violence against women in conflict

Supporting women affected by violence during conflict remained a top priority. As part of the WIN project, the GIP continued its partnership with the [Women Against Violence Europe network](#) (WAVE) with a development of a joint WAVE-OSCE [training manual](#) on *Preventing and responding to gender-based violence during the war and in post-war settings*.

Three workshops were also organized in the WAVE partner countries after the launch of the manual, giving 36 women changemakers an opportunity to share good practices and recommendations, and facilitating their co-operation. GIP also continued to support the women of Ukraine in addressing the consequences of conflict related to sexual



Operators of "102" emergency hotline are at a practical exercise to build skills of communicating with children at a training, organized by the OSCE, Uzhhorod, 6-9 June 2023. (National Police of Ukraine)

violence and further supported exchanges of best practices and lessons learned between human rights activists from Ukraine and BiH (see also sidebar below in the section *Supporting the women of Ukraine*).

The SPU made special efforts to address gender-based and sexual violence and organized a special presentation for senior judicial officials and academia on gender-based and sexual violence in armed-conflict settings, together with the country's Supreme Court and the High Anti-Corruption Court.

Moreover, more than 300 employees of the '102' hotline in Ukraine received training on how to effectively handle calls from children reporting gender-based violence, and more than 70 social service providers were trained to use the tools that help to form psychological resilience for both specialists and recipients of such services.

### Violence against women in the public sphere

ODIHR worked with women and men politicians in Georgia to strengthen their understanding of ways to address VAW in politics, by organizing a workshop and working with political parties on their codes of conduct. In Poland, civil society representatives received training on how to monitor gender issues in elections and the relevant ODIHR tools, such as its toolkit on *Addressing Violence against Women in Politics In the OSCE Region and its Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections*.

ODIHR's CHANGE project supported a joint initiative in North Macedonia by members of parliament, independent institutions and civil society and private sector representatives, as well as gender experts, to develop a strategy and action plan to reverse gender backsliding, in particular online. ODIHR also worked with police forces and government officials in Central Asia on training programmes on the issue of gender in police



Women human rights activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine, and OSCE gender team, Vienna, February 2023. (OSCE/Silvia Race)

reform, addressing such issues as effective and gender-sensitive responses to and handling of domestic violence cases, and countering gender stereotyping in the justice sector.

The OSCE PA's Special Representative on Gender Issues hosted a [meeting with gender equality NGOs in Armenia](#) prior to the PA's Autumn Meeting 2023 in Yerevan, to become better acquainted with gender equality-related issues in the country and establish better communication with local civil society.

Various initiatives took aim at working with journalists and the media to prevent and educate about VAW. The RFoM commissioned three experts—all women—to prepare [Guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists](#), to prepare the ground for the development of methodologies and tools aimed at identifying, predicting, and ultimately stopping the escalation of online violence against women journalists, potentially leading to more severe consequences both in the virtual realm and offline.

At the Ministerial Council in Skopje, the North Macedonian OSCE Chairman-in-Office in co-ordination with RFoM issued a Joint Statement on the safety of women journalists together with 45 OSCE participating States, reinforcing the participating States' pledge to condemn acts of online violence against women journalists as one of the gravest modern threats to both their safety and the freedom of the media, and to enhance journalists' safety by allocating the necessary human and financial resources to combat online violence.

In Turkmenistan, 24 journalists—13 of them women—participated in a skills development training course to produce media products on domestic violence and gender equality organized by the Centre in Ashgabat. The Programme Office in Bishkek, under their project on tolerance, conducted a four-month mentorship programme on gender standards in journalism for national media outlets, attended by chief editors and social media staff, among others.



OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues and Head of Canada's Delegation Dr. Hedy Fry, Vancouver, 30 June 2023. (Bernard Thibodeau, House of Commons Photo Services)

# 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence

Every year, the OSCE joins the global 16 Days of Activism campaign, using a broad array of media to broadcast its message, including through publications, events, social media and television. Under the slogan: *Act for Prevention. Act for Protection. Act now to end Gender-Based Violence!*, the 2023 campaign organized by the Gender Issues Programme in the Office of the OSCE Secretary General sent a strong message to protect survivors from all forms of violence. The 16 Days campaign started on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November, and ended on Human Rights Day, 10 December.

Launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, OSCE Secretariat Vienna, 24 November (OSCE)



As in previous years, the 16 Days was one of the most prominent and successful OSCE communication campaigns. In terms of social media coverage, it outdid the previous year's performance with 53 content pieces published across various social media accounts, gaining 977,343 impressions, 4,652 engagements and 68,146 video views.

Kicking off the campaign, the GIP organized a high-level event on 24 November hosted by the OSCE Secretary General titled *A silent war on women—ending femicides in the OSCE region* to raise awareness and discuss practical tools to address femicides.

All 11 OSCE field operations united around the 16 Days campaign, running a broad variety of activities. More than 120,000 people watched a video broadcast organized jointly by the UN agencies in the country and the Mission to Skopje under the #EncouragedAndProtected campaign, which informed the public about recent amendments to the country's criminal code, criminalizing most forms of violence against women and girls. In Montenegro, the Mission ran a social media campaign on VAW with the most famous members of the country's national football team, which was watched over half a million times. The Programme Office in Dushanbe reactivated its Telegram bot *You are not alone* in the Tajik language to help both survivors and witnesses of domestic violence with information about support services and hotlines. The Programme Office in Astana produced a video and interview with local gender experts, reaching through its social media channels 4,000 views and engaging with 3,000 accounts. The OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit organized training courses for police officers and prosecutors in Serbia, and the Mission to Serbia focused on the safety of—especially female—journalists, raising awareness about the specific challenges they face.

The Secretariat's social media campaign brought forward numerous achievements of the OSCE's field operations. In Kosovo, the first-ever law on prevention of violence against women and domestic violence was adopted in September. OMiK was instrumental in ensuring that regional best practices in the areas of VAW and DV were incorporated. The criminal code in North Macedonia was amended to better protect survivors of domestic violence and criminalize femicide. In Albania, over 300,000 people were reached by an OSCE-created podcast that focused on ending VAW. In Kyrgyzstan, 3,315 schoolchildren from across the country learned about preventing and combating gender-based violence, while in Kazakhstan 470 buses, 35 bus stops and 19 LED screens in six major cities spread calls to end sexual harassment.

Police officers in BiH were trained to effectively deal with domestic violence cases, and more than 40 high-level government officials work with the OSCE on legislative changes to strategically and systematically address the prevention and prosecution of femicide. More than 1,500 survivors of domestic violence in Tajikistan received legal and psychological support and new employment opportunities, while in Moldova 712 women and children refugees from host communities—either survivors or at-risk groups—received support through a specialized violence against women programme run by the OSCE Mission. In Georgia, the CPC participated in a related advocacy campaign by the UN and conducted its own visibility activities, in close co-operation with the CiO's Special Representative for the South Caucasus.





Global Consortium on Prosecuting Human Trafficking, 2023 Summit, Participants discuss gender-sensitive approaches to prosecuting THB at the OSR/CTHB workshop The Reality of Trafficking: Debunking the “Perfect Victim” Myth, 7 February 2023 (McCain Institute)

## Combating trafficking in human beings

In addition to its work addressing the demand that fosters the trafficking in human beings (THB) for sexual exploitation, the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) focused on gender-sensitive approaches in 2023, including through the organization of workshops, public engagement and publications.

For example, it organized a workshop at the Global Consortium on Prosecuting Human Trafficking’s 2023 Summit in Windsor, United Kingdom, to enhance the prosecutors’ understanding of gender-sensitive approaches for prosecuting THB crimes in a trauma-informed, victim-centred way. The Office also put together a set of recommendations to address gender gaps in national CTHB action plans (see Publications).

On the margins of a conference on prevention models to address the demand that fosters trafficking for sexual purposes organized by the Swedish EU presidency, the Special Representative gathered governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, and representatives of international organizations, to assess shortcomings in the preventive work, as well as in the treatment and support for victims of trafficking in the context of the war against Ukraine. As a result of these discussions, the Special Representative and the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict issued a joint statement on preventing and responding to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in the context of the war against Ukraine.

The OSR/CTHB also contributed to regional discussions on a revision of the EU anti-trafficking directive, with a focus on improving the response to THB for the purpose of sexual exploitation, especially of women

and girls, through addressing demand and addressing technology-facilitated trafficking.

As a result of a series of training sessions for social workers in Serbia, the number of alerts of potential THB victims sounded by social workers almost doubled from 2022 to 2023 (from 22 to 43), as reported by the National Centre for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. The Mission to Serbia also organized training sessions together with the Centre, targeting a total of 97 social workers (89 women, eight men).

In Albania, the results of a new scoping study identifying capacity gaps and recommendations to disrupt and prosecute THB compiled by the OSCE Presence were incorporated in the Ministry of Interior’s 2024 Action Plan on THB. The study identified capacity gaps and made recommendations on strengthening law enforcement. The Presence also supported the publication of three anti-trafficking manuals, giving special attention to gender-based violence as an element of human trafficking crimes and the need for gender-sensitive approaches at all stages of dealing with trafficking victims. Albania’s anti-trafficking policies received a further boost from a new National Referral Mechanism for the Identification, Referral and Assistance of Potential and Victims of Trafficking.

The Programme Office in Bishkek organized professional development training courses for police officers (12 men, three women), covering national and international legislation on THB, online investigation, new forms of THB, gender-sensitive approaches, and the functioning of National Referral Mechanisms. Another training course targeted 21 secondary school teachers (15 women, six men) to enable them to hold extracurricular CTHB- and migration-related activities in their respective schools.

## Podcast series homes on GBV in Albania



A podcast series started in 2021 as part of the OSCE Presence in Albania’s contribution to the 16 Days of Activism initiative and dedicated to putting the spotlight on GBV and gender equality, was extended into 2023 with six new episodes. The Gender Equality Dialogues, available at [www.buzzsprout.com/1876927](http://www.buzzsprout.com/1876927) (Albanian only), were produced by the OSCE’s implementing partner, [Citizens Channel](http://CitizensChannel.org). Speakers on the show included gender experts, state officials, civil society activists, academics and journalists. The show’s audience learned about GBV in Albania and how to report it to the police. A total of 900,000 impressions were recorded for the podcasts on the OSCE Presence’s social media channels, reaching 300,000 people who engaged with the content 18,000 times.

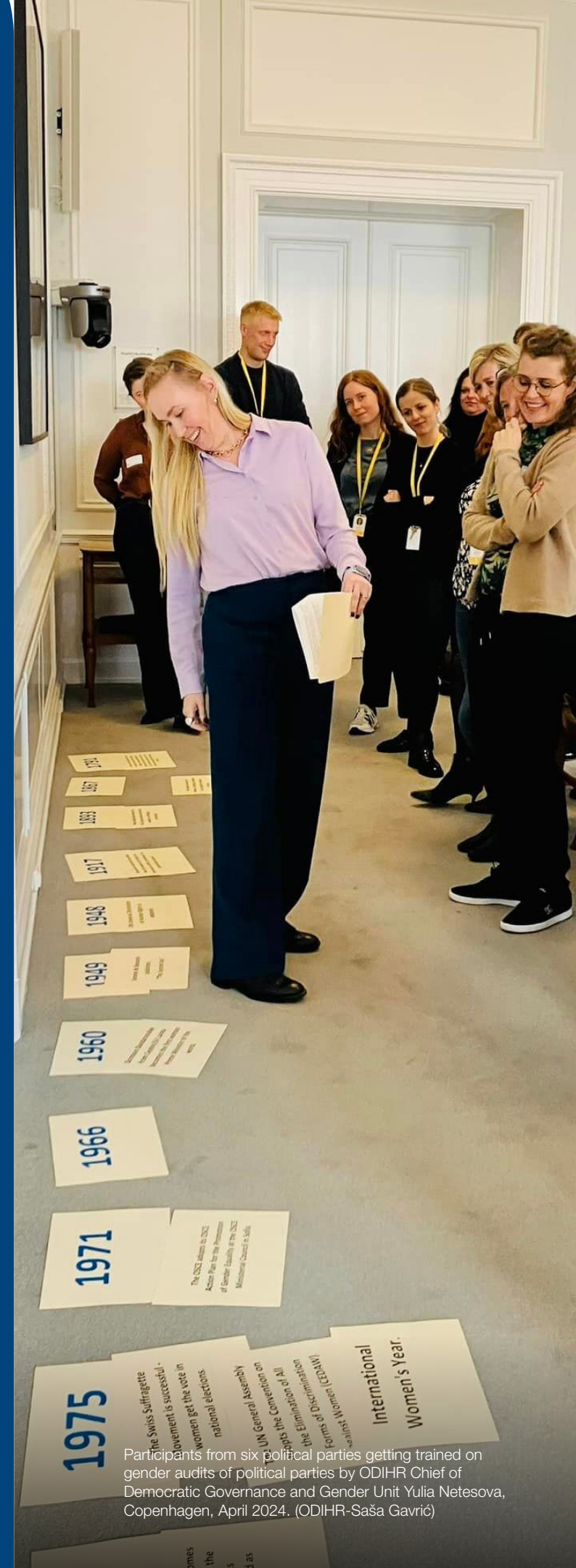
## OSCE Mission to BiH increases engagement to combat GBV

Taking prompt action to the increase in cases of femicide, the Mission to BiH strengthened its engagement on GBV in 2023 by initiating and hosting a process of co-ordination among key stakeholders to implement commitments adopted to urgently advance the response to domestic and gender-based violence. The Mission also trained the 20-strong legal staff of the BiH Human Rights Ombudsman Institution on how to integrate SGBV issues in their detention monitoring, bringing in experts on gender and SGBV concepts and highlighting the intersection of gender and security for individuals in detention, as well as methodologies for incorporating SGBV considerations into monitoring practices.

The Mission also developed, together with local authorities, a guidance document for actions of police officers in response to cases of domestic violence and a policy paper for institutionalizing a mandatory training programme for police officers on the standardized response to domestic violence. Additionally, the Federation BiH Ministry of Labour and Social Policy established a working group with experts in social protection work, gender equality and the response to gender-based violence, which developed draft training curricula for the response to domestic violence and GBV for social protection specialists.

### Strengthening gender-sensitive organized crime prevention and exit initiatives

A [new assessment report](#) prepared by TNTD/SPMU in 2023 sheds light on the widely overlooked issue of women's role in organized crime, across different criminal markets and at different levels of the criminal hierarchy. The empirical evidence and recommendations presented in the report can play an important role in supporting participating States in developing and implementing evidence-based and gender-inclusive activities to prevent and respond to organized crime, including by developing actions to identify and target risk factors for recruitment and providing meaningful opportunities to leave criminality.



## 2.3 Ensuring equal opportunity for women to participate in political and public life

In the area of supporting women in political and public life, the OSCE focuses on strengthening the equal participation of women in democratic processes, building up local capacities and expertise on gender issues, supporting community networks and addressing gender equality in electoral processes. Its activities aim to foster gender-sensitive approaches in parliaments and judiciaries, promote gender-responsive lawmaking, build women's leadership skills, and highlight youth and diversity perspectives. It also looks at specific issues related to women belonging to national minorities and gender discrimination in or by the media.

### Fostering women's political participation at national and local levels

ODIHR trained 88 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff (60 women, 28 men) in BiH, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Slovenia on gender-sensitive parliamentary work, including on equal political representation and gender-responsive parliamentary oversight and lawmaking. In Denmark and Serbia, ODIHR supported seven political parties in advancing gender equality. Three parliamentary political parties were audited and received hands-on guidance on how to advance gender balance and gender mainstreaming in party policies.

The Programme Office in Bishkek conducted two Schools of Leadership and a three-day training course in Kyrgyzstan for 63 elected local council women deputies. In Tajikistan, the Programme Office in Dushanbe supported two meetings with political

parties to discuss, among other issues, lessons learnt during the implementation of their gender strategies and their plans for 2024 and 2025 on gender mainstreaming and women and youth empowerment in politics.

Different field operations in South-Eastern Europe engaged in a wide array of activities to support gender equality and women in politics. The Mission to Serbia piloted the Women's Empowerment Network 'I ja se pitam' ('I have a say, too') in Novi Pazar to create a space for an open discussion on gender equality and women's empowerment issues. In Skopje, the OSCE Mission supported a regional conference of women MPs from South-Eastern Europe, organized by the parliament of North Macedonia under the title [Parliaments advance gender equality](#). The Mission to Skopje also supported the parliament's newly appointed gender adviser with a tailor-made programme to strengthen gender sensitivity in parliament.

OMiK, in collaboration with ODIHR, organized targeted capacity-building for male municipal directors about gender equality and the theoretical concepts of governance, aiming to actively engage men in all gender equality initiatives at the local level. Additionally, the Mission continued to provide specialized gender and governance training courses for women involved in public life at all levels of decision-making. OMiK also supported the establishment of the first-ever women's rights NGO in Dragash/ Dragaš, targeting Kosovo Gorani women and girls, as well as other local gender equality mechanisms, such as women's caucus groups, informal women's advocacy groups, and women's rights NGOs. In BiH, as a result of the OSCE Mission's sharing of best practices from countries in the EU and the region, one of the largest political parties introduced stronger gender equality measures and principles into its statutes, while another developed its first-ever Gender Action Plan.

The Programme Office in Bishkek, together with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Customs Organization and the Container Control Programme, hosted a regional training event in Bishkek on gender mainstreaming aspects in the context of the work of border management agencies. In Batken, Kyrgyzstan, a third meeting of the International Republican Women was organized by the Programme Office in co-operation with the Republican Committee of Soldiers' Mothers. Among other issues, the event participants discussed the evolving role of women in contemporary society and fostered cross-border collaboration.



ODIHR election observation, a voter's ID is checked during the second round of Türkiye's presidential election. Ankara, 28 May 2023. (OSCE/Katya Andrusz)

## Elections

Several events in the OSCE region helped enhance women's participation in electoral and democratic processes. Under its Women's Municipal Excellence Programme, the Presence in Albania held information sessions in three regions to discuss the role of women councillors as local representatives, following the May 2023 local elections in the country. A total of 45 women councillors took part in the events, which aimed at strengthening their effectiveness and efficiency in their new roles. The

Presence also ran a seminar to present the Guidelines on Ethical and Professional Media Election Reporting in Albania, attended by 24 participants (12 men and 12 women).

The Mission to BiH trained nine local election candidates from six parties, representing in parts the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, on human rights and gender equality. OMiK, together with Kosovo's Central Election Commission (CEC), organized the first in a series of events aimed at strengthening women's participation in the electoral processes and within the work of the Election Management Bodies, such as the CEC, the Municipal Election Commissions and the Polling Station Committees.

The Programme Office in Astana held an international conference on women's leadership and engagement in August 2023, which provided a platform to discuss lessons learned and the way forward regarding such themes as international standards pertaining to women's political participation, the experiences of women candidates in electoral processes, harassment and bullying faced by women candidates, the policies of parliament, and strategies to enhance the capacities of women in politics.

ODIHR developed a toolkit for gender audits of election administration based on its audits in the Western Balkans election management bodies, which played a key role in following up on election observation recommendations, including to incorporate the equal participation of women in all electoral processes.

## Media

The gender digital divide and the surge in the use of online artificial intelligence tools gained prominence in the debate on gender and the media in 2023. Together with ODIHR, the RFoM provided guidance to OSCE participating States on how to overcome the digital divide that prevents women from equally participating in political and public life.

Focusing on women journalists, the RFoM released guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists, a document that aims to empower civil society, states, and other stakeholders to incorporate a gender perspective into the monitoring of journalists' safety.

A round table in Tashkent, Uzbekistan gathered 40 representatives from the country's parliament (Oliy Majlis), ministries and government agencies, as well as journalists and CSOs to discuss how to encourage a more inclusive and informed society, breaking down stereotypes and fostering a society in which everyone's voice is heard and respected. The Mission to Montenegro worked with students on a project to foster media literacy and to create a safe environment for journalists, teaching them how to identify gender stereotypes and understand challenges in media reporting on violence against women and girls, avoiding sensationalism and understanding the role of the media when reporting on GBV.



Focus group discussion on OSCE guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists, Skopje, 30 March 2023. (OSCE/Dimitar Dimitrovski)



WIN –  
Women & Men Innovating &  
Networking for Gender Equality

## Ukrainian Women Leaders

Supporting Women's Leadership in Peace and Security through Networking and Mentoring

# SPOTLIGHT Support for the Women of Ukraine

Supporting the Women of Ukraine remained a top priority in 2023. The Gender Issues Programme under the WIN project supported two retreats for Ukrainian women civil society activists. The first, including 30 women activists and members of women-led organizations, focused on raising awareness, building capacity and providing psychological support. A total of 73 per cent of the participants at the event, which was organized by the Ukrainian non-governmental organization Girls, said the retreat had generated new working ideas about fresh projects and activities they could implement in the future. The second event, a three-day retreat organized by WIN project partner Women's Information Consultative Center (WICC), brought together women peacebuilders from 14 regions of Ukraine who are members of the ICAN (MOXY) Network. ICAN stands for "Peace Uniting Women of Ukraine". The aim of the retreat was to restore emotional wellbeing and develop a revitalized strategic plan for the network's growth under the support of the WIN project and beyond.

Twenty-one women activists from Ukraine and BiH met for a second networking and knowledge exchange event in Vienna in early 2023, a safe space that allowed them to exchange experiences, strategies and approaches to combat violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict

settings. Their meeting resulted in a list of needs and recommendations, including the need to implement the Istanbul Convention and a unified documentation methodology for war crimes, as well as the importance of supporting women's grassroots networks and the psychological support and rehabilitation of activists. In addition to the women activists, the event was also attended by international experts from the European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Legal Action Worldwide, and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights. To continue discussions on the topic, a side event was organized during the 2023 Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, where recommendations from civil society were put forward to address protection needs and ensure that survivors receive justice.

Through the GIP WIN project, the OSCE trained 76 employees (66 women, 10 men) of the State Emergency Services on gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive humanitarian response and women's leadership in humanitarian action. The training event was set up as a ToT course and was followed by a leadership training course for 30 women in managerial positions in the State Emergency Services, a first-ever for this group.

ODIHR further strengthened its partnership with the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy in Ukraine and organized a study visit for a group of gender advisers from Ukraine to the Czech Republic. The study visit agenda covered a comprehensive list of topics, including presentations on the constitutional, legal and institutional framework for gender equality. ODIHR also deepened its co-operation with the Ukrainian and Polish Congresses of Women by bringing the founders of the Ukrainian Women's Congress to the XV

Polish Congress of Women in Poznan, Poland, in September. The Congress gathered thousands of women and offered open thematic discussions in six plenary sessions and 77 expert panels, focusing on gender equality, women's political participation, women's social and economic rights, environment, education, health, local governance and culture.

OSR/CTHB held a workshop on strengthening the legislative response to human trafficking risks for Ukrainian refugees, in co-operation with the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland and the Human Trafficking Foundation (UK). The MPs agreed on a public communique, whereby they committed, among others, to follow up with their national parliaments on several anti-trafficking legislative and policy actions. OSR/CTHB also organized an international conference in Vienna on the role of civil society and anti-trafficking hotlines in preventing THB and increasing the identification of and assistance to victims amid refugee flows from Ukraine.

In Ukraine itself, the SPU worked with the country's judiciary on a variety of projects to promote gender equality, address gender-based and sexual violence, as well as non-discrimination. The Support Programme implemented a novel approach to promote gender equality within the justice system by expanding the network of trainers among the gender focal points in courts at the National School of Judges. It also made a significant effort to address gender-based and sexual violence in armed conflict settings by involving senior judicial officials and academia to discuss these critical issues. Additionally, the SPU trained judges from first instance courts, appeal courts and the Supreme Court on the identification of gender-sensitive cases, the review of sexual violence crimes (including those committed during wartime), and relevant European Court of Human Rights practices.



Closing ceremony of the first OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Programme, Vienna, 9 October 2023. (OSCE/ Micky Kroell)

## 2.4 Strengthening women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction

The OSCE is committed to advancing the WPS agenda, including commitments to promoting women's participation in the field of peace and security. It supports implementation of UNSCR 1325 by supporting participating States with the development of National Action Plans, enabling the integration of women into the security sector across its region, and strengthening the role of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

### Building capacities and resilience

As part of the OSCE commitments under the WPS and Humanitarian Action Compact (WPS-HA Compact), the OSCE Gender Issues Programme continued to support women active in peacebuilding and conflict resolution and co-organized with UN Women and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders a high-level event in Istanbul with 25 prominent women peacebuilders and mediators from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. The participants discussed key challenges faced by activists, helped to set their priorities and provided recommendations on how international and regional organizations can continue supporting women's civil society organizations and women leadership in times of complex conflicts and crises.

The WIN project supported also the meeting of the Regional Platform for Women Peace Dialogue in Tbilisi, Georgia, led by the project's implementing partner, the NGO IDP (internally displaced persons) Women Association Consent. The Platform includes women peace leaders from 12 countries across Eastern and Southern Europe as well as Central Asia regions. Thirty women activists discussed a variety of topics related to the WPS agenda and its potential application in emergencies, increased violence and protracted conflicts.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), in partnership with GIP under the WIN project, issued a report to examine the intersectionality of gender and national minorities, and the situation of minority women within the context of its conflict prevention mandate, with a view of the HCNM eventually developing policy guidance for participating States on this issue.

In 2023, the CPC organized the sixth edition of a training programme on conflict prevention and resolution, under the OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security initiative. A total of 150 young professional, 85 per cent of them women, from 48 participating States and nine Partners for Co-operation, enrolled in the programme.

**“This has been the most discovering, encouraging and inspiring experience I've had in a while. We shouldn't take anything in this world for granted, this education is really a great gift and it should be appreciated. Thank you, OSCE and donors.”**

Amina from Bosnia and Herzegovina,  
2023 OSCE Scholarship recipient

CPC organized a number of meetings with representatives of the women-led IDP organizations in Georgia and had frequent exchanges with women experts on the ground. The regular exchange of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office for the South Caucasus with displaced women, in particular, allowed the OSCE to reflect their views in the Geneva International Discussions, high-level meetings and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Ergneti, where concrete concerns were communicated to relevant stakeholders.

CPC's Mediation Support Team also undertook a mapping of the OSCE's engagement in dialogue facilitation in the field and identified numerous activities in support of the meaningful inclusion and participation of women in dialogue processes.

The role of women in ensuring peace and security was the topic of a round table held in Kazakhstan in November, organized by the Programme Office in Astana together with ODIHR and in co-operation with the country's Law Enforcement Academy. In BiH, the OSCE Mission held a similar event in Prijedor, aimed at fostering co-operation on trust-building initiatives between the two BiH entities. The Mission to Skopje organized three dialogue facilitation workshops with municipal officials, aiming to sensitize them to gender issues, inclusiveness and equality and give them tools to promote gender equality among citizens.

The Programme Office in Dushanbe, in co-operation with the Committee on Women and Family Affairs and other development partners, supported a regional forum, held in Astana, on the role of women in law enforcement and defence in Central Asia.

In Uzbekistan, the Project Co-ordinator's office trained 70 representatives of the judiciary and law enforcement on the principles and commitments related to WPS, relating it to the national context of ensuring access to justice for vulnerable groups of the population, including victims of GBV, and of strengthening the role of women in the security sector.

## 9th Dialogue Academy brings together women change-makers

In October, the highly competitive OSCE Dialogue Academy took place in North Macedonia for the ninth time, bringing together 24 young women from Belgrade and Prishtinë/Priština for an intensive 10-day programme on women's empowerment, dialogue and mediation, and women in peace and security. Dating back to 2014, the Dialogue Academy Network of Alumnae (DANA) has since become a vibrant community of more than 200 female change-makers dedicated to bringing their societies closer together.

### Development of National Action Plans

A national working group responsible for developing the third National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 was established in Serbia in July, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Defence and other state institutions, as well as of CSOs. Together with UN Women, the Mission to Serbia supported the meetings of the working group and provided the members with recommendations from a network of CSOs that support the development of the third NAP, which is slated to be adopted in mid-2024 and is anticipated to address also women's safety.

### Strengthening women's participation in security sector institutions

Across the OSCE region, activities took place to support the work of women in the police force.

The Security Sector and Governance Reform project, in co-operation with the GIP, TNTD, ODIHR and the five Central Asian OSCE field operations, organized a regional conference

on *Promoting Women's Participation in Law Enforcement in Central Asia* in Astana in September, with participants that included women in high management positions in the law enforcement sector of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The conference brought about a set of recommendations to further support the development of networks for women in law enforcement in Central Asia and to break down gender barriers and promote women's meaningful involvement in the security sector.

The Mission to Skopje helped institutionalize its Gender Mentoring Programme for women in the police force by handing it over to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The programme fosters career advancement of women in police and works towards an overall increase of women participating in the force.

In Astana, the Programme Office worked with the Law Enforcement Academy to organize a ToT course on leadership for women working in law enforcement, the military and the judiciary, looking at psycho-physiological aspects of female leadership, best practices for stress and anti-crisis management, ways to manage emotional exhaustion, and how to lead effective communications.

In Astana, OSCE Executive Structures organized with field operations and the government of Kazakhstan the Regional Conference on Promoting Women's Participation in Law Enforcement in Central Asia in September, the first networking and knowledge-sharing event for women police associations, networks and unions in Central Asia and other parts of the OSCE region. The event was attended by 55 (48 women, 7 men) representatives of national authorities, law enforcement agencies, policewomen associations, CSOs, academic institutions, and international organizations involved with security sector institutions.

In Uzbekistan, as part of an OSCE project to increase and support the participation of women at all levels of policing, a steering

group was established to look at the factors affecting the increase of women's representation in the country's police force. A needs assessment was undertaken as well, together with police and National Guards personnel in eight regions of Uzbekistan, to identify ways to overcome potential barriers for the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in these institutions. The project was implemented by the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, SPMU, CPC and GIP.

Working with police forces in Central Asia, ODIHR delivered a training course and a ToT course for participants from the Ministries of Interior, law enforcement and civil society that focused on mainstreaming gender in police reform, addressing such issues as effective and gender-sensitive responses to and handling of domestic violence cases, and countering gender stereotyping in the justice sector. ODIHR also co-organized a regional conference on Promoting Women's Participation in Law Enforcement in Central Asia in September, together with the GIP, CPC, SPMU and the Programme Office in Astana.

The Programme Office in Bishkek, together with the Kyrgyz Association of Women in the Security Sector, held a seminar on law enforcement work during extreme and emergency situations in March, which aimed at increasing the participants' knowledge of national and international standards of human rights protection and the maintenance of public safety and security during such events. The Programme Office also facilitated capacity-building of the Kyrgyz Association of Women Judges (KAWJ) to advance gender equality, empower women within the judiciary and foster a gender-sensitive justice system. The Programme Office facilitated the KAWJ's annual conference, which gathered all Association members, as well as newly appointed judges in the process of joining the Association.

## Preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism

Two new OSCE regional networks of women professionals working towards the prevention and countering of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism (P/C VERLT), were established in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe. These initiatives, spearheaded by the GIP WIN project and the OSCE's Action Against Terrorism Unit (ATU), help support the visibility of women in this space and encourage collaboration across borders and sectors, contributing to prevention, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration, of returnees from conflict zones.

The ATU reviewed the National Action Plans on counterterrorism and P/C VERLT of North Macedonia and of Tajikistan in 2023, focusing on ensuring gender-balanced participation and the advancement of women in the counterterrorism and P/C VERLT space across sectors.

The Presence in Albania furthered the representation and participation of women at national and local levels in a project on preventing and addressing safety and security issues in the country. The project integrated gender mainstreaming principles, and women professionals working on the countering of violent extremism were involved as speakers and trainers in a multitude of events, including a multi-stakeholder event on strengthening the regional dialogue and co-operation in the area of youth crime prevention for South-Eastern Europe and the high-level conference Cyber Security Challenges in Albania.

In Kosovo, 110 residents participated in awareness-raising sessions on the role of women in P/C VERLT (particularly as linked to misogyny), among them 48 women from different religious communities.

# Helga Maria Schmid

OSCE Secretary General



"Advancing the WPS agenda requires strong commitment and allyship, which are at the heart of network. These spaces are essential for promoting co-operation and mutual support. They also serve as forums for strengthening partnerships and discussing new and ongoing priorities. By investing in networks, we empower women change-makers, amplify their voices, and foster partnerships for security."

## Supporting Women's Leadership in Peace and Security through Networking and Mentoring

The OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders, including peacebuilders and mediators, established by OSCE Secretary Helga Maria Schmid in December 2021 and supported by GIP under the WIN project, continued to prove a catalyst for supporting women's leadership in peace and security efforts.

On International Women's Day, 8 March, the Secretary General launched the *Young Women for Peace Initiative*, a dedicated networking space for young women between the ages of 18 and 30, to bring their perspectives on peace and security to the fore and ensure their voices are heard and their right to be included respected.



Participants of the OSCE Gender Issues Programme's WIN project capacity-building activities on women's leadership for the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (Lviv/Ukraine, November 2023)

In October, 12 young women from across the OSCE, as well as Afghanistan, graduated from the first edition of the OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Programme, while the second edition was launched with 16 participants. The one-year programme allows young peacebuilders to receive support from internationally renowned mentors and provides them extensive capacity-building on leadership, mediation and dialogue facilitation.

Under the Secretary General's Networking Platform, GIP also launched a dedicated platform for Women peacebuilders from Ukraine and, together with TNTD/ATU, two Networks of Women Professionals in P/C VERLT in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe, bringing together 55 women professionals from state agencies, civil society, academia, media and OSCE field operations. To showcase the impact of women's networks, several high-level events at international level were organized, including at the Geneva Peace Week 2023 and at the Women, Peace and Security Week in New York, in co-operation with the Mediterranean Women's Mediators Network. A regional conference organized by the WIN project's implementing partner Global Network of Women Peacebuilders under the title Women's Networks WIN Together

brought together 28 peacebuilders and mediators (27 women, one man) from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. Another event—a meeting of the Regional Platform for Women Peace Dialogue in Tbilisi, Georgia—was attended by 30 women activists who discussed the WPS agenda and its potential application in emergencies, situations of increased violence and protracted conflicts.

In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the WIN project organized a regional meeting that focused on enhanced networking and capacity-building and involved 22 representatives (19 women, three men) of Women's Resource Centres and civil society organizations in Central Asia.



Yagmura Kargar from Afghanistan was one of the participants in the Regional Forum "E-commerce in handicraft as a driver of key changes in women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia", organized by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan in May 2023. (OSCE)

## 2.5 Promoting equal opportunities for women in the economic sphere

The OSCE's activities in advancing women's economic and employment opportunities are very broad. They include not only developing their skills as businesspeople, to deal with finances, credit and property, but also overlap into other areas, such as natural

resource management, climate change, workplace and domestic violence, conflict prevention, disaster risk reduction and anti-corruption.

The first fully funded *OSCE Scholarship Programme for Young Women in Renewable Energy* was launched by the OSCE in collaboration with the German

Kazakh University in 2023, with the goal to aid Central Asian countries in developing the workforce required to achieve their green energy and climate objectives while simultaneously narrowing the gender gap within the sector. As part of the same project, the OSCE concluded the inaugural edition of its first mentoring programme for Central Asian women in the energy sector in 2023. Thirty Central Asian women working in the energy sector and ranging from junior to mid-level energy professionals took part in a first-ever mentoring programme, helping them to become energy leaders and drivers of the energy transition in their region. This programme aimed to empower women to lead the energy transition in Central Asia and was implemented by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) and the [Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition](#) (GWNET).

### Supporting women's equal access to economic opportunities

The SPU promoted the inclusion of gender mainstreaming activities in a new business-related project, launched with the project partner, Ukraine's Ministry of Economy. The Ministry incorporated activities aimed at enhancing the state's capacity to assess the gender impact of business regulations and promoting the role of women in business and the labour force. These activities, scheduled for 2024–2025, have the potential to lead to change by promoting equal participation of women in the economic sphere.

A new set of Recommendations published by the HCNM focuses on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Social and Economic Life, which offer practical tools for participating States and policymakers to facilitate social and economic participation at different levels and across various areas. They explicitly focus on the situation of women, highlighting the intersectional component of discrimination and the need for policymakers to identify and address

obstacles to participation specifically faced by women from various age groups from national minorities. The increased focus on women in this set of Recommendations reflects, in part, the HCNM's efforts to understand more deeply the links between security, minority rights and gender equality.

### Fostering women's economic opportunities and support to women entrepreneurs

As part of the *IWILL: Inspiring Women's Initiative-taking for Lasting Leadership project* initiated in 2022 by OCEEA, four short films and a communication strategy were put together for the Ministry of Economic Development of Montenegro that had the goal to positively change attitudes towards female entrepreneurship in the country.

In South-Eastern Europe, the Mission to BiH facilitated a discussion on strategies for the integration of women with disabilities in the labour market. In co-operation with the Women Network of the Co-ordination Board of Associations of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) of the Doboj region, the Mission organized a round table on entrepreneurship and PwDs to address the employment challenges they face, particularly women in rural areas, and to explore strategies for their full integration.

In Kosovo, the Mission continued to work with vulnerable categories of women, particularly returnee and non-majority women, assessing their employment status, possibilities for income generation, and their needs for training and economic activation.

In Central Asia, the Programme Office in Astana co-organized a series of workshops to promote women's economic participation in Kazakhstan's regions, focusing on enhancing practical entrepreneurship skills. Participants drew from their own experiences during case study analyses and shared

strategies aimed at advancing women's participation in economic development.

A total of 75 jobs were created by women entrepreneurs in Jalal-Abad province and 27 in Talas province in Kyrgyzstan as a result of assistance provided by the Programme Office in Bishkek. The Office supported economic empowerment training for 46 women entrepreneurs in these regions, focusing on business planning and marketing. From these 46, 34 women were selected to receive in-kind support from the Office in the form of equipment.

In Tajikistan, 1,370 people (1,322 women, 48 men) living in remote villages gained new professional skills by participating in a total of 107 vocational training courses on sewing, embroidery, weaving, baking, the preparation of delicatessen, and computer literacy. Out of these 1,370 graduates, 430 found jobs in governmental and private entities, while 429 set up small sewing or bakery businesses at home. The courses were organized by the Programme Office in Dushanbe via Women's Resource Centres in the country.

The Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan focused its support on the use of various digital tools to support SMEs, in particular run by women entrepreneurs. The office put together a tailor-made programme for SMEs in Termez for more than 150 women entrepreneurs starting up or running their businesses, training them to use digital tools for their work and thereby helping to bridge the digital gender divide in the country.

### Natural resource management and climate change

Equal opportunity resource management that provides economic benefits to all, was the goal of a training event the Presence in Albania organized in the form of four workshops to a total of 37 municipalities and 79 specialists in this field (41 men, 38 women). This built on the Presence's support for the development of the Municipal Natural

Capital methodology in Albania, which in 2023 was further disseminated. The project was undertaken in co-operation with the Ministry of State for Local Government, the Agency for the Support on Local Self-Government and the Association for Local Autonomy.

In Central Asia, the OSCE put its emphasis on supporting the development of women-led agriculture businesses. A forum in Uzbekistan, co-organized by the Project Co-ordinator and the International Business Women Association in Tashkent in February, explored solutions offered by new digital technologies and prospects for developing women's entrepreneurship in agribusiness. The Centre in Ashgabat organized a capacity-building seminar in Turkmenistan for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the field of agriculture, with a session especially devoted to the role of women in this sector. A total of 30 per cent of attendees at the event were women, who benefitted from the training course by learning more about the specifics of agricultural businesses, as well as the challenges and opportunities for SMEs led by women.

In July, Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid hosted the OSCE High-Level Conference on Climate Change in Vienna as a follow-up to the Ministerial Council Decision on *Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change*, adopted in Stockholm in December 2021. The conference provided a venue to share experiences and highlight areas in which practical co-operation and partnerships can be strengthened, including by promoting the critical roles women and youth play as key stakeholders.

### Gender equality and anti-corruption

Following the successful launch of a pioneering research on the nexus between Gender and Corruption in 2022 and the training of law enforcement and anti-corruption experts in Tirana, the Gender Issues Programme organized another training session in November 2023 in support of the law enforcement authorities and anti-corruption agency in Prishtinë/Priština, with the participation of law enforcement staff. The event focused on the importance of women's empowerment in fighting corruption and included an overview of global initiatives aimed at empowering women in the fight against corruption and the identification of strategies to enhance women empowerment activities within anti-corruption efforts. The participants represented the Association of Women in Kosovo Police, Association of Women in Kosovo Correctional Service, Agency for Prevention of Corruption, and the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo. The Presence in Albania, as part of an initiative to enhance gender mainstreaming in anti-corruption and public procurement policies and practices, developed training material that comprised specific examples of gender equality in procurement, promoting principles of socially responsible procurement and of integrity.

### Disaster risk reduction

The Programme Office in Dushanbe supported the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence in Tajikistan with capacity-building for 20 psychologists (12 women, eight men), working for the Committee's newly created Psychology Unit to provide support to the population in case of emergencies. A total of 240 women and 240 men took part in 23 community awareness-raising sessions on disaster preparedness, organized by the Programme Office together with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan. The Office also facilitated the establishment of 23 Local Development Management Committees and trained 60 members (30 women, 30 men) of these local bodies on community-based disaster risk reduction.



Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid and Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry addressing the panel at High-Level Conference on Climate Change, Vienna, 7 July (OSCE/Micky Kroell)



Senior Adviser on Gender Issues Lara Scarpitta with participants of the OSCE side event on DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT SETTINGS: WHY IT MATTERS at the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, 8 March 2023 (OSCE)

## 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

The OSCE organized various side events at the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67), which took place at UN Headquarters in New York from 6 to 17 March 2023.

The OSCE Gender Issues Programme, UN Women and Finland's government co-organized a side event on Digital empowerment of women in conflict settings: Why it matters. It gathered high level speakers from international organizations, governments, the private sector and civil society to discuss how digital tools could empower women economically and provide essential income generation opportunities in volatile conflict settings. The event presented

an opportunity to showcase results and successes from the Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality commitment makers and inspire others to take action to replicate good practices to address the gender digital gap in a crisis context.

Focusing on the promotion of gender-sensitive approaches, OSR/CTHB held an event on Ending sexual exploitation of women and girls: Advancing policies and regulations to curb tech-facilitated human trafficking. Key discussion topics included how gaps in the policy and legislative landscape concerning technology-facilitated trafficking of women and girls can be addressed, and how to harmonize policy and legislative action across jurisdictions to avoid patchwork approaches that are ill equipped to address the scale of the problem, the diversity of harms and the sector-specific

challenges. The Special Representative also spoke at a Swedish-sponsored CSW67 side event titled *The Equality Model: Giving Women a Real Choice*.

ODIHR organized two side events, the first of which focused on Technological challenges and solutions in combatting trafficking of women and girls in overlapping emergencies. The meeting served as a framework to reaffirm the importance of including survivors'

voices and generating solutions to prevent and combat trafficking of women and girls.

The second side event highlighted the need for effective National Referral Mechanisms to combat trafficking in women and girls, as well as strong and effective anti-trafficking mechanisms for pro-active identification, protection and assistance of women and girls, victims and survivors of human trafficking.



## Crafting empowerment: Nuria Isakova's journey of entrepreneurship and tradition

Women entrepreneurs in Talas and Osh in Kyrgyzstan have benefitted from OSCE support since 2017, when the Programme Office in Bishkek kicked off an initiative to support the growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises across the country. The Office followed up with the establishment of Entrepreneurship Support Centres and a women's entrepreneurship project component running from 2022 to 2023.

One of the beneficiaries of the OSCE's engagement was Nuria Isakova. She launched a YouTube channel in 2022, which she used to teach traditional crafts in Kyrgyz and Russian, and later in English. The channel, filled by now with more than 180 videos, was a hit with viewers, 2,000 of whom decided to subscribe to it, thereby providing Nuria with an income.

Nuria Isakova, graduate of the OSCE-supported Economic Empowerment of Women project in Kyrgyzstan's Talas region. (OSCE/Entrepreneurship Support Centre in Talas)

## 2.6 Building national mechanisms for the advancement of women

ODIHR released [Institutional Mechanisms as Critical Actors for Gender Equality: A Review from the OSCE Region](#), the first comparative publication on governmental bodies for gender equality of its kind. Based on research in 42 participating States, the study provides concrete guidance to the States on how they can strengthen the governmental bodies in charge of gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming. In Ukraine, ODIHR continued its support for the Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy in her goal to build the capacity of newly appointed gender advisers in regional administrations and on the national level and support the release and dissemination of a Gender Advisers' Handbook, which helps the advisers advocate for gender equality in all spheres of life and support equal rights of women and men.

The Mission to BiH, among other activities, supported the establishment of a gender equality mechanism within the Brčko District Government. In Montenegro, a methodology for the evaluation of gender-responsive budgeting was adopted by the Ministry of Finance and included in the budget management information system.

## Promoting gender equality in partnership with OSCE Mediterranean and Asian partners

The OSCE carried out several activities in 2023 aimed to mainstream gender equality in partnership with its Mediterranean and Asian partners, as well as in co-operation with other international organizations.

In May, the Polish Chair of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group (APCG) convened the first meeting of the APCG on ensuring women's participation in political and public life in times of crisis. The session particularly highlighted the critical human rights situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. The meeting identified the main obstacles to women's public and political engagement during crises in the context of the ongoing situation in Afghanistan, and further explored the direct impact this has on the human rights of women and girls in the country.

Gender equality also featured high in key interactions, organized by the External Co-operation Section in the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, with the European Union in the framework of the OSCE-EU High-Level Meetings and subsequent working-level discussions in the framework of the OSCE-EU Working Group. In line with the new EU Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Compact, GIP also delivered the first ever tailor-made training sessions for over 20 CSDP gender focal points.

# Meet our Gender Equality Champions of 2023

The Gender Issues Programme administers the annual Gender Champion Awards, which were established by the OSCE Secretary General in 2018 to recognize outstanding achievements of OSCE leaders—individual women and men, teams, or projects—to promote gender equality.



Ambassador Alena Kupchyna with the OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, Gender Champions Award Ceremony, Vienna, 13 July 2023. (OSCE/Micky Kroell)

## Leadership category

An advocate for women's equality throughout her entire professional career, Ambassador Alena Kupchyna is the OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats and holder of the Organization's White Ribbon Award 2019. A lawyer and diplomat from Belarus, Ambassador Kupchyna has worked tirelessly to place gender equality at the heart of her professional efforts.



The winner of the Gender Focal Point Award, Julia Haas with the OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, Gender Champions Award Ceremony, Vienna, 13 July 2023. (OSCE/Micky Kroell)

## Gender Focal Point category

Working as Associate Project Officer with RFoM, Julia Haas is part of a new generation of OSCE personnel who are dedicated to ensure that gender equality is translated into real life action for change. As the Office's Gender Focal Point in 2023, she has given her strong support to the adoption of a departmental Gender Action Plan and a Joint Declaration on Gender Justice and Freedom of Expression.



The winner of the Staff Member Award, Dimitar Dimitrovski with the OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, Gender Champions Award Ceremony, Vienna, 13 July 2023. (OSCE/Micky Kroell)

## Staff category

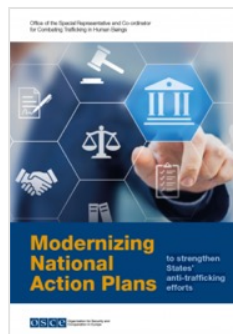
Working for the OSCE Mission to Skopje's communications and media relations unit opened Dimitar Dimitrovski's eyes to a severe problem: the online abuse, prejudice and harassment women journalists faced in his country. He decided to address this problem by supporting the creation of an online training module that provided women journalists with the knowledge and resources needed to proactively take care of their safety and security.



OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues Lara Scarpitta and Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council Ambassador Igor Djundev with the winners of Gender Champions Award, Vienna, 13 July 2023. (OSCE)

## Best Initiative/Project

The name is also programme: ODIHR's CHANGE project uses the Office's entire human dimension mandate to promote and improve gender equality. This ranges from strengthening mechanisms and other institutions working on gender equality, to increasing women's participation in politics, the electoral process, the judicial sector and the security sector.



**OSCE CTHB (2023)**  
Modernizing National Action Plans to Strengthen States' Anti-trafficking Efforts



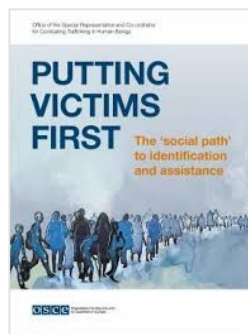
**OSCE, Transnational Threats Department (2023)**  
Understanding The Role of Women in Organized Crime



**RFoM (2022)**  
Safety of Journalists Toolbox



**ODIHR (2023)**  
Promoting gender equality in politics and democratic institutions



**OSCE CTHB (2023)**  
Putting victims first: The 'social path' to identification and assistance



**OSCE PA (2023)**  
Understanding and addressing the gendered consequences of the war in Ukraine



**RFoM (2023)**  
Guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists



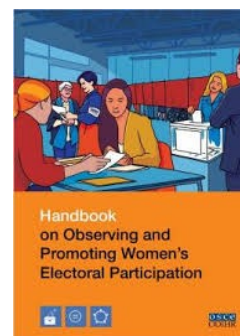
**OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek (2023)**  
Practical Manual for journalists



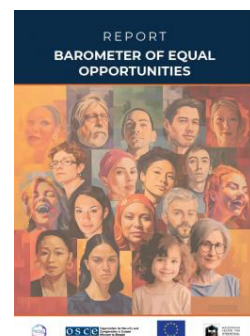
**OCEEA (2023)**  
Mentoring Program on Empowering Central Asian Women in Renewable Energy



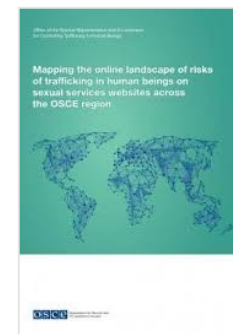
**HCNM (2023)**  
What does it take—achieving equality for minority women



**ODIHR (2023)**  
Handbook on Observing and Promoting Women's Electoral Participation



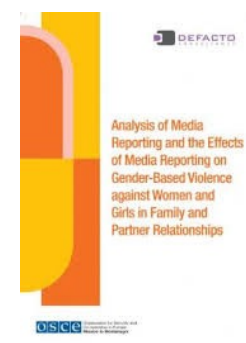
**OSCE Mission to Skopje (2023)**  
Barometer for Equal Opportunities



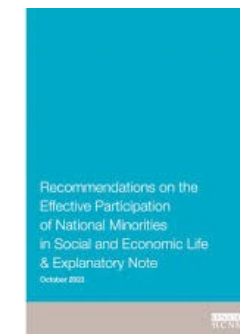
**OSCE CTHB (2023)**  
Mapping the online landscape of risks of trafficking in human beings on sexual services websites across the OSCE region



**OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan (2023)**  
Guidelines to Ensure Rights of Women and Children in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management



**OSCE Mission to Montenegro (2023)**  
Analysis of media reporting and the effects of media reporting on gender-based violence against women and girls in family and partner relationships



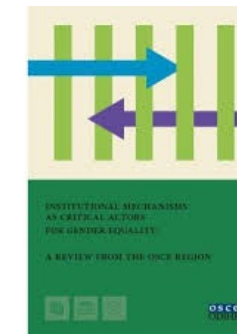
**HCNM (2023)**  
Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Social and Economic Life & Explanatory Note



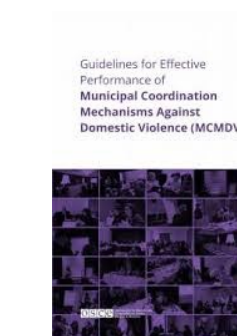
**OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (2023)**  
The presence of principles and policies of gender equality in political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina



**OSCE Mission to Serbia (2023)**  
Twenty years of parliamentary gender equality mechanisms in Serbia



**ODIHR (2023)**  
Institutional Mechanisms as Critical Actors for Gender Equality: A Review from the OSCE Region



**OSCE Mission in Kosovo (2023)**  
Guidelines for Effective Performance of Municipal Coordination Mechanisms Against Domestic Violence

**OSCE Secretariat**

Office of the Secretary General  
Gender Issues Programme  
Wallnerstrasse 6  
1010 Vienna, Austria

Email: [equality@osce.org](mailto:equality@osce.org)  
[www.osce.org/secretariat/gender](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/gender)

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