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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Long-term trends in gender equality and  
the empowerment of women in the ECE region**

### Regional review of progress: regional synthesis

#### Note by the secretariat

##### *Summary*

The Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2013/18 noted the relevance of the regional reviews and outcomes of the regional level intergovernmental processes in preparation for the “Beijing+20” global review which will take place at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015.

As part of the preparations for the regional review, all member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) have been requested to respond to the United Nations questionnaire on the Implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the outcomes of the Twenty-Third special session of the General Assembly in 2000.

This note provides a synthesis of the responses received and is submitted for the regional review in the ECE region. It summarizes long-term trends and policy developments in the last 20 years and looks at the twelve areas of concern covered by the Beijing Platform for Action in the ECE region since the last regional review in 2009. It is complemented by document ECE/AC.28/2014/4 which highlights, by country, selected achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality.

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## I. Introduction

1. This report presents a review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) and the outcomes of the Twenty-Third special session of the General Assembly (2000) in the ECE region. It has been prepared as a background document for the Beijing+20 regional review meeting as part of the global 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action to be held in March 2015.

2. The review is based on the responses of 46 ECE member States to the United Nations questionnaire included in the Guidance note for the preparation of national reviews.<sup>1</sup> It examines progress and challenges of advancing the agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women enshrined in the Beijing Platform for Action from a regional perspective. Chapter II of this report analyses the achievements and challenges in the ECE region since 1995, highlighting long-term trends and the impact of the recent economic crisis. Chapter III follows the structure of the Beijing Platform for Action in addressing key achievements and challenges in all twelve critical areas of concern. Chapter IV summarizes trends with respect to the collection and dissemination of gender-sensitive data. Chapter V details the future priorities of member States, and their positions regarding the post-2015 development framework.

3. Despite the diversity of the region, the review outlines common factors of success, such as the recognition of gender inequality, the political will to promote change, effective national equality mechanisms accompanied by financial commitment; and collaboration between women's organizations and the state.

4. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which is legally binding for the countries in the ECE region (all but the United States have ratified it), and the Beijing Platform for Action are mutually reinforcing. The Convention and CEDAW documents, such as Concluding Observations by the CEDAW Committee have guided national action toward gender equality in the region. European Union (EU) standards on gender equality have exerted an important impact, also beyond EU member States.

5. Progress, however, has been slow as stereotypes permeate the media and education. The long-term gender imbalance in unpaid and care work continues. Controversial discussions about gender equality stifle, even sometimes reverse, progress in the region.

6. Due to space constraint, this report contains only selected examples of country-specific policies and measures for illustrative purposes. A more comprehensive review of information per country is reflected in document ECE/AC.28/2014/4 and in the national responses which are posted on the ECE website at <http://www.unece.org/gender>.

## II. Overview analysis of achievements and challenges since 1995

7. The diversity of economic and social conditions, cultures, traditions and patterns of social interaction which impact gender relations have resulted in varied policies to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. Shared priorities and long-term trends play

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<sup>1</sup> UN-Women and the United Nations Regional Commissions have developed a common Guidance Note to assist with and facilitate the preparation of the national reviews for Beijing+20 review process. <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/publication/BeijingPlus20-GuidanceNote-en.pdf>.

out differently in the various subregions because of different structural characteristics of countries.

## **A. Priorities and long-term trends**

8. Over the last two decades, countries have focused on three priority areas: combating violence against women, women in the economy, and women in power and decision-making. Gender mainstreaming and the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics have been the key instruments used to achieve and monitor progress.

9. Violence against women remains a key violation of women's rights in the region. Public acceptance of violence has decreased and awareness of the dimension of violence and its harmful effects has spread. More women today assert their rights with the help of law enforcement as well as women's organizations.

10. This has been achieved in part thanks to improvements in the legal framework addressing gender-based, and particularly domestic violence. Most countries have adopted legislation on violence and established services for the victims of violence. However, particularly in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) countries and South-East Europe (SEE), there are gaps in services and access to justice. The sensitivity of those professionals who interact with violence victims, such as police and law enforcement officials, social administration personnel, and staff of service providers has increased, but remains often inadequate.

11. Countries have undertaken efforts to increase women's labour force participation, reduce occupational segregation and the gender pay gap, facilitate the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities, support women's entrepreneurship or enhance female participation in top-level economic decision-making. Nevertheless, significant gender gaps remain. Most policy innovation and progress in the area of women's economic empowerment has been achieved in the EU.

12. Progress in women's political participation and representation has been slow. Numerous models of quotas and other measures to promote women in elected bodies have been developed, but have rarely achieved a major change in the unequal distribution of power between women and men. With very few exceptions, female political representation across all levels remains far below the 40 per cent recommended by the Council of Europe as indicating balanced representation. Assessing progress in women's political power beyond elected positions is difficult and because of weak data, particularly in EECCA countries.

13. In the past twenty years, gender equality has become a well-established policy paradigm and countries have made important progress in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming as a strategy for promoting equality.

14. Gender mainstreaming incorporates both crosscutting and targeted policies and strategies. Some countries in the region emphasize both components. Others, mainly EECCA countries, have prioritized targeted interventions. There are also new, "gender-neutral", individual-based policies that nevertheless aim to promote gender equality, for example the focus on individual income security in the Netherlands.

15. From 1995 to 2005, thanks to the momentum of the Beijing Conference, many new laws and action plans on gender equality were introduced. Several countries formulated numerical goals, and many actively engaged in indicator development in the various areas of the Platform for Action, with a key role taken by the EU. Yet, as the momentum of the Conference subsided, progress in legislation and implementation slowed down. Numerical goals were replaced by broader aims.

16. The collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators has progressed. Gaps remain, however, particularly in EECCA and SEE, and it is still not common to present gender statistics in an easily accessible, user-friendly way.

## **B. Factors of progress toward gender equality**

17. Some common factors of progress can be identified. These include the political will to promote change; the development of effective, adequately staffed and funded national equality mechanisms, and accountability structures accompanied by financial commitment; the impact of EU legislation and policies, even beyond EU member States, and the collaboration between women's organizations and the governments.

18. Rights awareness and recognition of gender inequality have been crucial for progress. Gender equality has been strongly anchored in government policy in a number of countries. Powerful national institutions for the development, coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender policies and clear structures of accountability are necessary and have been instrumental where significant progress has been achieved.

19. Adequate financial commitments (from the state budget, or donor support) have been essential for the development and functioning of institutional structures for women's empowerment and gender equality.

20. The right to equal treatment is a general principle of EU law and a central pillar of EU social policy. Gender equality is enshrined in the EU Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Numerous directives – which are binding for EU member States - exist on equal treatment at work and in pay, the prohibition of discrimination in social security, minimum requirements for parental leave, maternity protection and rules on access to employment, working conditions, and legal rights for the self-employed. Priority policy areas and objectives are highlighted in the European Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010–2015. Funding to promote gender equality, combat discrimination and tackle violence against women is included in the Rights, Citizenship and Equality Programme (2014–2020).

21. To reaffirm the EU's commitment to gender equality, in particular in the context of the economic crisis, the Council of the European Union adopted the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011–2015). The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) takes a central role in the assessment of progress achieved and the analysis of key indicators.

22. EU legislation, policies and funding programmes have contributed to the creation of common standards in the region. The impact of EU norms has reached beyond EU member States: countries aspiring for EU membership or intensified relations with EU have aligned their national legislation with EU standards. EU norms and good practices from individual EU members have served as a point of reference in the promotion of gender equality, supplementing binding legal obligations arising from CEDAW.

23. Women's organizations and academia have been crucial for policy development, gender analysis, awareness raising and build-up of gender expertise. Women's organizations, for example in EECCA and SEE, have continuously engaged in the monitoring of states' legal obligations on gender equality, and institutional memory, often in the absence of effective state mechanisms. Civil society engagement on gender-based violence has been particularly important in EECCA with inadequate state-funded service provision. Civil society and academia are often involved in consultation mechanisms at national or local level. However, the financial situation of many women's organizations is unstable, relying on volunteers and on external donor support.

### **C. Obstacles on the way towards gender equality**

24. Implementation of laws and policies remains weak, particularly in EECCA and SEE. Here, barriers in the access to services and limited access to justice remain key concerns for women, and for specific groups of women also in other countries, such as rural women, ethnic/national minorities, women with disabilities and migrants. The eradication of discrimination and gender stereotypes, for example in the media and the education system, has been slow. Funding for gender equality policies and political attention to gender equality have both declined during the last decade.

25. The unbalanced allocation of unpaid housework and care responsibilities between women and men persists. The long-term impacts of this imbalance are underestimated.

26. In parts of the region, increasing conservatism and controversial discussions about values and norms associated with gender equality have slowed, even sometimes reversed, progress. The resistance to gender equality partly reflects not enough knowledge and understanding of gendered impacts of various policies and decision-making. Gender policies and interventions thus may be faced with rejection both from the side of duty bearers and rights holders. Xenophobia and anti-immigrant attitudes in some countries are challenges to women's human rights.

### **D. Impact of economic and financial crises**

27. The economic and financial crises of the last years have had a severe impact on many countries in the ECE region. There is mounting evidence that crises have a gender dimension. Women's unemployment and relative poverty has increased in many countries, as has part-time and precarious employment of women. Women in informal work in EECCA have been severely affected, as well as women with non-Western European backgrounds in EU countries. In Central Asia and the Caucasus, the crisis has reduced male labor migration, causing a decline in remittances to women-headed families. In the EU, the economic crisis had a particularly strong impact on young women, who face greater difficulties to find jobs than young men. Access to credit has become even more limited.

28. Most measures to counter the crisis have been gender-blind. In some countries, austerity policies have led to funding cuts and changes in social policies including healthcare and education, which mainly affect women. Funding for national and local gender equality institutions and for women's organizations has been significantly lowered or even stopped.

A 2013 **European Union** report on the impact of the economic crisis on women and men draws four main conclusions:<sup>2</sup>

1. Gender gaps in employment, unemployment, wages and poverty have fallen during the crisis, based on lower rates of employment, higher rates of unemployment and reduced earnings for both men and women;
2. Women and men have both been highly discouraged from seeking employment, increasingly compelled to take up involuntary part-time work, and have suffered from a curtailment of their working rights. Women have been particularly affected by cuts to maternity leave and benefits and discrimination on account of pregnancy;
3. Fiscal consolidation may reduce both welfare provisions and the related employment, with disproportionate impacts on both genders. Social transfers have been important in reducing the gender gap in poverty rates. Gender disparities may widen as an unintended consequence of fiscal consolidation.
4. In the vast majority of countries, gender mainstreaming has not been implemented in policy design and implementation over the crisis. Neither recovery nor consolidation measures have been assessed from a gender perspective.

### **III. Progress in the implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action since 2009**

#### **A. Women and poverty**

##### **Achievements**

29. Awareness has increased on the greater risk of poverty of specific groups of women, even where absolute poverty rates are low, or lower for women than men: countries have developed targeted policy responses addressed at elderly women and single mothers. Support for women's entrepreneurship, including for rural women, has been an important component of poverty reduction strategies.

In order to reduce the poverty rates of older women, the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** has introduced a new single-tier pension for those retiring after April 2016 in the form of a simpler flat-rate state pension set above the basic means test. The government expects that, in the first ten years, 650,000 women will benefit from the new valuation of their pension.

##### **Challenges**

30. Women face specific poverty risks regardless of overall poverty rates, for example in case of divorce and single parenthood, or because of disability. Women's care responsibilities cause vulnerability, mainly because of labour market implications such as being forced into part-time work, or facing career interruptions and discrimination based on

<sup>2</sup> European Commission - Directorate-General for Justice, *The Impact of the Economic Crisis on the Situation of Women and Men and on Gender Equality Policies* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2013).

family status. The share of women in poverty has increased, particularly in Southern European countries strongly affected by the economic crisis. Sex-disaggregated poverty data remains limited, particularly in EECCA countries. Poverty increases trafficking risks and is a reason for child marriage. Women's poverty in old age remains an acute problem, because of the gender pension gap and women's greater reliance on derived pension benefits.

## **B. Education and training of women**

### **Achievements**

31. With few exceptions, - such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey - girls and boys have equal access to pre-primary, primary and secondary education. In many countries, women outnumber men in secondary and/or tertiary education. The number of women with higher education has increased significantly.

32. Public campaigns highlight the benefits of girls' education among population groups with lower access rates, e.g. ethnic minorities. Some EECCA countries and Turkey use grants to boost women's access to education.

Since 2001, a presidential quota in **Tajikistan** ensures access of women from rural areas to higher education institutions. Between 2011 and 2015, placements for women from rural areas have increased from 591 to 666.

33. Initiatives for non-discriminatory education and on eliminating gender stereotypes in teaching material and practice are widespread. Education/vocational training and careers in "atypical" professions are promoted for both young women and men, particularly in EU countries.

### **Challenges**

34. Gaps in access to education still exist in certain countries, affecting specific groups of women and girls most, such as ethnic minorities, girls from remote rural areas, girls with disabilities, or non-Western immigrant women in EU member States. Roma and ethnic/national minority girls face barriers particularly at the secondary level (e.g. in Bosnia Herzegovina, Georgia, Slovenia, Ukraine). More girls than boys are not enrolled in schools (e.g. in Albania, Tajikistan), drop out or do not enter secondary schools (in Tajikistan, Turkey), and more women than men are illiterate, especially in rural areas (in Albania, Turkey). Girls' presence at all levels of professional education in Kyrgyzstan has declined as a consequence of marriage and early motherhood, thus limiting women's access to paid work.

35. Even in countries with educational gender parity, or a higher level of education of women, educational success does not translate into proportionate economic success and political decision-making power for women. The mismatch is clearly documented in the EU, as well as Switzerland.

36. Girls' and boys' educational and professional choices are tainted by stereotypes, with girls choosing general education and humanities, and boys going into technical education and professions. These choices later restrict women's access to better paying jobs. Public education on gender equality, stereotypes and violence remain challenges.

37. Young women's vocational training in male dominated professions is still limited by law in a few countries (e.g. Belarus, Poland). In Poland, women under 18 cannot be

trained as blacksmiths, patternmakers, and equipment and operators of metallurgical machinery and equipment, among others.

38. The education system itself reflects prevalent patterns of sex segregation. There is a sharp predominance of female teachers, with a strong vertical segregation: the higher the level of the institution, the higher the proportion of male teachers.

## C. Women and health

### Achievements

39. Maternal health has continuously improved, especially in EECCA and SEE and Turkey, over the last twenty years, thanks to better service provision. In Kazakhstan, maternal mortality declined by six times between 1995 and 2013; in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the number of women dying due to complications linked to pregnancy and childbirth has halved in the last 20 years.

40. Women have benefited from health sector reforms that improved social health insurance (e.g. Armenia), broadened access to insurance (e.g. France for part-time workers) or improved service provision outside large urban areas (e.g. Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey). Gender mainstreaming of health policy and planning has improved, as have health statistics on women.

**Hungary's** 100 year old network of visitor nurses, which provides public health services, has started a transformation to better respond to the needs of adult and elderly women: for example, the nurses now provide cervical cancer screenings.

41. Abortion rates have declined, in particular where access to affordable effective (emergency) contraceptives for women has improved. Youth-friendly health services, including gynecological services to young women from underserved communities, have been expanded. Sex education has been included in school curricula (see also chapter on girls). Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination is available free of charge in many EU member States.

42. Programmes for the prevention, early detection and treatment of breast and cervical cancer have continued, as have the protection and treatment of HIV-positive pregnant women and their newborns.

### Challenges

43. While women's average life expectancy exceeds men's by about 6 years, women face more years in poor health. Women see themselves as less healthy, report more illness and more frequently forgo care for financial reasons. Equal access to health services has not been achieved for all rural, minority, migrant, refugee women / asylum seekers, affecting particularly women in EECCA and SEE. Women with disabilities face barriers in access to health care, including in the EU.

44. The development of gender-sensitive disease prevention policies remains important: cervical and breast cancer rates remain high in some countries, or have increased (e.g. Iceland, Kyrgyzstan). Women do not always avail themselves of available preventative services: less than 50 per cent of entitled women attended preventative screening in Lithuania and Ukraine, for example.

45. Low investment in sexual and reproductive health limits women's access to modern contraception and affects the quality of reproductive health services, in particular in rural areas in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The existence of conscience-clauses for some medical procedures de facto limits access to health services that are de jure available.

46. HIV/AIDS is spreading most rapidly in EECCA and knowledge of HIV transmission methods remains low in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Prevention strategies rarely consider the higher risks women face on account of their lack of sexual autonomy and self-determination in contraceptive use, with a few exceptions such as in Norway.

Faced with increased prevalence of HIV among women and more female migrants coming from HIV-afflicted regions, **Norway** has gender-mainstreamed its national HIV strategy for 2009–2014. Among other measures, the strategy requires organizations receiving public grants to incorporate a gender perspective into their projects. In 2013, Primærmedisinsk verksted [Primary Health Care Workshop], a women-based organization, received state grants for a project to strengthen the empowerment of immigrant women and girls in the context of HIV.

47. Women's nutrition remains an issue of concern in some EECCA countries, particularly for ethnic minorities and in rural areas. Eating disorders in women are on the rise in EU member states.

## D. Violence against women

### Achievements

48. Combating violence against women has been a key priority over the last twenty years. A significant amount of resources has been allocated to fight violence. Important progress has been achieved, in particular in the reduction of domestic violence. Numerous countries today have legislation on violence, the most recent addition being Tajikistan (2013).

49. The social perception of violence has changed profoundly: violence is no longer publicly condoned. More women assert their rights, with the help of law enforcement and women's organizations.

Since 2013, victims of rape, sexual assault and sexual abuse in **Slovakia** are entitled to compensation for physical injuries resulting from the offence as well as to compensation for non-material harm (mental trauma, stress, anxiety, frustration).

50. Legal achievements regarding violence against women in recent years have included the criminalization of violence and of rape, both within and outside marriage, the possibility of prosecuting rape ex officio, and the prohibition of forced marriage. Definitions have been specified and broadened, for example by including dating and intimate relationships without cohabitation under domestic violence and the inclusion of stalking and sexual harassment as violence. The use of protection/constraining orders has increased, requiring perpetrators rather than victims to leave the common home. Female genital mutilation is prohibited and prevention activities have increased in the EU and Switzerland.

51. Services for survivors of violence have spread at national, regional and local levels, often with defined standards of service provision. Some services are accessible for specific groups of women, e.g. women with disabilities. Trainings for staff in shelters and police is

provided, and telephone helplines are widespread. Some countries have initiated or expanded programmes to work with perpetrators of violence.

Municipalities in **Norway** must by law run crisis centres for women, men, and children and offer comprehensive measures tailored for disabled persons. These provide users with free support, guidance, and assistance to contact other service agencies, safe temporary housing, a daytime programme, a 24-hour telephone service, and follow-up during the reestablishment phase.

The Police Academy of **Georgia** has special training courses on domestic violence and human trafficking issues for the following groups: patrol-inspector, district inspector, border guards, detective-investigators, and special programs for the promotion of patrol police officers.

52. Collaboration between civil society and the state in violence prevention has deepened. Improvements in data collection on gender-based violence were achieved, particularly in EU member States.

In **Israel** and **Turkey**, distress buttons are issued to women at high risk of violence.

In **Austria**, the Smartphone App FEM: help provides contacts, allows to document injuries, acts of stalking, and infringements of prohibition orders. This application is available in Bosnian, Croatian, English, German, Serbian, and Turkish .

53. The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) has drawn increased attention to the issue. The Convention has been ratified by Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, France, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey.

### Challenges

54. Despite changes in public attitudes, violence is still prevalent, and victims are still blamed in public debates. Often, women in rural areas are more affected by violence. In Kyrgyzstan, 60 per cent of marriages in rural, mono-ethnic areas are based on bride kidnapping, two thirds of them without the women's consent.

55. Due to a lack of trust in state institutions, only a small percentage of violence victims contact the police. In Slovakia, only 8 per cent of women victims contacted the police and only 27 per cent knew of at least one institution that provides assistance. In Cyprus, 57 per cent of victims did not contact anyone. Public officials remain inadequately sensitized to violence against women.

56. Existing laws are not always implemented effectively and are often limited to domestic violence, thus excluding other forms of violence. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention has not been completed in many countries.

57. Critical steps backward in legislation happened in Ukraine and Croatia: in Ukraine, after an amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code 2013, the offender cannot be removed from the family for more than three hours. In Croatia, the minimum penalty for rape has been reduced from at least three years to at least one year imprisonment.

58. Networks of services for victims remain inadequate, particularly in EECCA and SEE countries. Even in EU member States, the financial situation of organizations that provide assistance to survivors of violence is unstable. Mentally or physically disabled women face major problems in accessing services.

59. Progress in data collection on violence has been slow and incomplete. Data is particularly weak where the cooperation of different state bodies is required.

A judicial Benchbook for Domestic Violence Case Evaluation in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** was developed by a panel of nine judges in 2014, and was reviewed by legal scholars and practitioners as well as the institutions training judges and prosecutors. It represents a resource on domestic violence developed by judges for judges.

## **E. Women and armed conflict**

### **Achievements**

60. Action Plans for the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) are widespread (Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom, United States of America).

61. Several ECE member States initiated or co-sponsored Security Council resolution 2106 (2013) on sexual violence in armed conflicts and Security Council resolution 2122 (2013) on the role of women in conflict, the 2013 G8 initiative on preventing sexual violence in conflict, and the 2012 NATO review of the practical implications of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) for operations.

62. The position of women in national armed forces has improved, thanks to measures such as diversity policies, quotas, or contact persons/units for gender issues. Peacekeeping missions now include gender field advisors, and military organizations are careful to raise awareness about and monitor the status of women. The proportion of women in military service has increased in many countries, but mostly in lower levels. In Croatia, the first female general was appointed in 2014. Military service will be mandatory for Norwegian women from 2015.

63. Some progress was achieved in prosecuting sexual violence during the war in SEE. For example in Bosnia and Herzegovina, survivors of sexual violence have been granted war victim status.

### **Challenges**

64. Progress has been slow regarding the inclusion of women in decision-making on conflicts and peacebuilding, as the focus remains on women victims in conflicts. However, adequate protection and assistance to civilian women victims also remains an issue of concern.

65. Internal displacement and refugee movements affect women in several countries. Many women with children among the displaced/refugees need legal aid, employment, training/retraining, welfare, childcare and healthcare. Countries most recently affected by the consequences of violent conflict and refugee movements are Turkey and Ukraine.

## **F. Women and the economy**

### **Achievements**

66. EU standards on discrimination and gender equality in the workplace serve as a regional reference point (alongside the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization). The EU *acquis* had a positive impact on legal developments particularly in

new EU member States and accession countries. Initiatives for gender equality in the economy have benefited from EU funding, for example through Structural Funds.

67. There are a few countries where women and men today are relatively equally represented in the labour market (e.g. Finland, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia), or where motherhood does not have a large impact on employment participation (e.g. Slovenia). Many countries have adopted policies to support the employment of mothers.

To reduce the unemployment of women with family responsibilities in **Bulgaria**, employers receive subsidies for the salaries and social insurance contributions when they hire single parents and mothers with children under 5. In 2013, 672 women benefited from the programme.

68. Progress has been achieved in other countries, even where gaps continue. For example, women's activity in Belgium increased from 49 per cent in 1995 to 61 per cent in 2013. In Turkey, women's labour force participation increased alongside their unemployment, indicating that labour force integration has often come at unfavourable terms and into structures of inequality and discrimination.

69. Women's entrepreneurship has become an important arena for economic empowerment in the region. Microcredit institutions and grants have supported women-run small and medium enterprises and are prevalent in EECCA countries in particular.

In **Poland**, a "Business Bus" travelled to 16 towns providing practical, individual business creation advice to women.

70. Some countries in the region have adopted new policies targeting a reduction in the gender wage gap, a longstanding concern in the region.

In 2012, **Iceland** published an Equal Pay Standard through tripartite collaboration (Ministry, Confederation of Trade Unions, Confederation of Employers) and Icelandic Standards, a system to confirm that women and men working for the same employer are paid equal wages and enjoy equal terms of employment for the same jobs and for work of equal value. Adoption of the standard is optional for companies, but those that wish to receive certification under the standard are required to follow a formal procedure from an accreditation authority.

71. Labour code reforms have strengthened the principles of non-discrimination in many EECCA countries. Legal practice on non-discrimination has developed, particularly in new EU member States. Partnership between governments, trade unions and employers' organizations in addressing discrimination has intensified.

72. Attention to work-family reconciliation has continued, mainly in EU countries. Measures have focused on redistributing family responsibilities and unpaid care work to men: innovative parental leave policies make a portion of the leave available to both parents and set incentives such as full pay and cash bonuses for fathers who use it.

In **Armenia**, fathers are entitled to unpaid leave for a period of up to two months to better facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life, while their wife is on maternity or childcare leave. The lack of paid benefits has led to a low uptake of paternity leave.

73. Access to childcare services has improved in a number of countries, mainly EU member States, thanks to increased investments and concrete targets (e.g. EU targets to provide childcare services for at least 90 per cent of children between 3 years and the mandatory school age, and at least 33 per cent of children under 3 years of age by 2010). State subsidies for kindergarten attendance have spread.

74. A few countries support women's economic independence through tax legislation and policy. In Georgia, for example, single mothers are now exempt from the income tax.

### **Challenges**

75. Gender inequalities in the economy persist. Discrimination in hiring, promotion, wages and dismissal is still common, as is sexual harassment. In some high- and middle-income countries, gender gaps in unemployment have worsened since the economic crisis. Elsewhere, gaps have narrowed, through a worsening of men's situation rather than an improvement in women's.

76. Horizontal and vertical segregation continue in labour markets. Many more women work part-time than men, especially in female-dominated professions, with predictable negative impacts on career opportunities, wages, and future pensions. Women are employed in higher numbers than men in informal work.

77. The gender wage gap is unchanged in some countries, or has increased recently. Evidence from Poland confirms that mothers are offered lower salaries than women without children and than men (with and without children). The gender wage gap also translates into a gender pension gap, causing women's poverty in old age.

78. In several EECCA countries, labour codes still restrict women's employment in certain professions and do not fully incorporate the notion of equal pay for work of equal value. Sexual harassment is often not adequately addressed.

79. Migrant, minority and disabled women face barriers to labour market access, encounter discrimination, and are overrepresented in informal employment. Rural women are more vulnerable to unemployment and poverty. Gaps between women and men in business ownership have not closed.

80. The unequal division of unpaid care work limits women's labour market participation, increasing the prevalence of part-time work among women. In Poland, in 2011 the employment rate among mothers was 12 per cent lower than among women without children. Affordable childcare continues to be undersupplied in many countries, particularly in EECCA, SEE and Southern European EU countries. Improved availability of childcare in EECCA has benefited urban families more than rural ones, and middle-income families more than lower-income ones.

## **G. Women in power and decision-making**

### **Achievements**

81. The number of women in positions of political power has increased in several countries, sometimes as a result of dedicated legislation. The percentage of women in the national parliament in Kyrgyzstan, for example, has increased from 2 per cent in 2000 to 23 per cent in 2014, following the adoption of a 30 per cent quota for each gender on electoral lists in 2007. The collection and public accessibility of data on women's political

participation has improved. Many countries have instituted policies to promote women to political leadership.

**Kazakhstan** has expanded the leadership development of women: leadership schools for women and clubs for women in politics operate in 15 regions of the country.

82. Efforts to increase women's representation on the boards of companies are under way (mainly in EU countries, and in Switzerland), most often through voluntary agreements, and in a few cases through legislation. Women's proportion has increased, but remains low, with few exceptions: e.g. Finland, France, Iceland, Norway, Latvia.

Women members of parliament in **Kyrgyzstan**, together with women's non-governmental organizations have promoted changes to the Criminal Code to toughen punishment for stealing brides and actively fighting for effective enforcement in this matter, following recommendations by the United Nations special rapporteur on violence against women.

### Challenges

83. Increased participation of women in politics can lead to direct action on women's issues. However, difficulties arise in assessing women's political participation and power beyond elected bodies, particularly in EECCA.

84. Women's representation in national parliaments still remains far under the 40 per cent recommended by the Council of Europe as indicating balanced representation (with the exceptions of Andorra, Finland and Iceland). In many countries, the parliamentary representation of women has been stagnating at about 20–25 per cent for several election cycles. There are even cases of declining representation of women, e.g. in Hungary. Quotas are not always observed, or are even actively undermined.

85. Traditional norms and stereotypes continue to work against women's political involvement. Difficulties in balancing a public career with family responsibilities hold women back from public office, and high-level corporate positions. Some groups of women, including women with disabilities and ethnic minorities remain marginalized.

## H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

### Achievements

86. National mechanisms for women's empowerment exist in most countries.

87. Interministerial structures coordinate gender mainstreaming in many countries. Legal expertise on discrimination and women's rights has deepened, in some countries through test cases, CEDAW monitoring, or – in the case of the EU – through case law coming from the European Court of Justice. Civil servants now often receive gender training. Gender budgeting has been enshrined in several countries (e.g. in Austria) and is implemented regularly.

### Challenges

88. The capacities of national mechanisms to implement, coordinate, and monitor gender equality policies, and their possibility to hold others accountable, remain limited. National mechanisms, particularly at regional or local levels, continue to lack adequate resources. Good coordination between the various parts of the national mechanisms remains a challenge.

89. National mechanisms are often overhauled after changes in government, leading to loss of institutional memory and capacity. Some countries still do not have a national mechanism as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (e.g. Armenia, Belarus, Georgia).

90. National mechanisms for women's advancement and gender equality have been merged with mechanisms on non-discrimination or child protection in some countries, largely due to the economic crisis. This has diluted the focus on the structural aspects of gender inequality.

91. Progress toward gender budgeting has been slow; funding for gender equality policies has remained low and difficult to track.

## I. Human rights of women

### Achievements

92. Women's human rights and gender equality have been integrated into the work of national human rights bodies. The human rights framework has been employed to draw attention to multiple discrimination.

93. Efforts to better include national minorities and immigrants in gender equality policy and protection against violence have continued, for example by disseminating gender equality legislation in non-official/minority languages, e.g. in Estonia and Slovenia.

The government in **Finland** sponsors literacy and basic Finnish language education for immigrant women. There is a network of over seventy groups of immigrant women and voluntary teachers in various Finnish cities and towns.

94. During the last five years, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings from 2005 has been ratified by Andorra, Azerbaijan, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, San Marino, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine. In EU member States, national legislation was aligned with EU directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting victims.

95. The legal situation of women migrants has improved in some countries, for example by lifting residence requirements linked to the duration of a marriage for victims of violence. Gender-specific grounds in asylum processes are better recognized in EU countries on the basis of the European Qualifications Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU).

### Challenges

96. The monitoring of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action has not always been explicitly linked to legal obligations under CEDAW, nor is the mutually reinforcing nature of both documents consistently highlighted. Some countries have yet to lift or narrow down reservations they have to CEDAW, in accordance with the agreement in the Beijing Platform for Action.

97. Trafficking remains a serious concern. Legal protection of trafficking victims who testify against traffickers remains inadequate, including in the EU member States.

98. Medical and legal help for, and social and economic integration of migrant women remain inadequate. Efforts continue to increase migrants' knowledge about their legal rights, and to ensure access to justice among minority communities (e.g. Roma, Russian-

speaking minorities in some EECCA countries). Violence linked to harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, and honour-related crimes remains a critical problem.

99. Several countries face specific human rights concerns, including the precarious situation of women's human rights defenders, bride kidnapping and forced marriages, child marriages, women's sexual and reproductive rights, including access to safe abortions, and the situation of women prisoners .

## **J. Women and the media**

### **Achievements**

100. The number of women occupying important roles in the media has increased, as has the incorporation of gender perspectives in reporting. In France, the proportion of women among journalists increased from 37.5 per cent in 1996 to 43 per cent in 2014. Some media organizations in Croatia and the Netherlands have developed self-regulation instruments on gender equality, and gender issues have been incorporated into journalism training in many EECCA countries.

101. Some gender equality laws or general non-discrimination laws cover the media. Elsewhere, separate legislation has been developed, such as media or advertising laws that emphasize gender equality, e.g. in Georgia, Germany and Israel.

In **Ukraine**, women's organizations and the Ukrainian Association of Marketing developed standards of non-discriminatory advertising on the grounds of gender. In 2010, the Standards were registered in the Ukrainian Research and Training Centre on Standardization, Certification and Quality. However, there is no system of regular monitoring of implementation of the standards.

### **Challenges**

102. Discrimination and barriers for women to express their opinions through the media are still widespread. Women are underrepresented (journalists, objects, experts) and gender issues are underrepresented in reporting. The highest positions in the media industry are held by men, and women are more employed as presenters than as commentators or analysts. The number of complaints about discriminatory or degrading advertisements, or the sexualization of girls in media is constantly high.

103. Data on the representation of women and of gender issues in media continues to be weak. In most countries, there is no state monitoring of mass media for discriminatory materials and violations of ethical norms. Where monitoring happens, it is mostly done by NGOs. Exceptions are France and Spain, who have commissions on the image of women and an annual barometer of diversity in the media.

## **K. Women and the environment**

### **Achievements**

104. The number of activities on women and the environment has increased, and there are efforts to strengthen gender mainstreaming in policy development, and in international debates.

105. Women are more involved in governmental and non-governmental bodies dealing with environmental policy, and gender issues were taken into consideration in big

international conferences such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Warsaw 2013.

Since 2009, **Finland** supports a programme to ensure women's participation in climate related planning and implementation. Sixty-seven per cent of civil servants in the Ministry of the Environment were women in 2012. As part of Finland's presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2011, an electronic portal about climate change and gender was created.

### Challenges

106. Gender mainstreaming in environmental policymaking is not systematic, and awareness of gender mainstreaming in the management of natural resources remains low. Capacity development of women representatives in civic councils, expert groups, and government commissions, and monitoring of gender issues in environmental decision-making are not systematic. Even in countries that were recently affected by natural disasters, gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction is not common.

## L. The girl child

### Achievements

107. Progress has been achieved in the legal protection of girls against violence and against sexual exploitation and abuse. The legal age of marriage of women was increased and equalized for women and men in many EECCA countries.

108. Enhancing the life choices of girls and eradicating gender stereotypes in the education system have been priorities, for example in the EU and in Israel.

The Ministry of Security and Justice in the **Netherlands** led the production of the film «*De mooiste chick van het web*» (The Prettiest Chick on the Web). It points out the risks of social media to children, parents, friends and teachers ([www.mediawijzer.net](http://www.mediawijzer.net)). A teaching pack was also developed for pupils in the first two years of secondary schools. During the first week, 45 schools registered for this initiative.

### Challenges

109. Girls are still exposed to gender stereotyping in the media and in education. Differences in the treatment of girls and boys in education often lead to stereotypical educational and professional choices.

110. Coercive marriage, child marriage or bride kidnapping still exist in EECCA countries and Turkey, often affecting girls in rural areas and from ethnic minorities. In Georgia, 17 per cent of women marry before the age of 18. Some countries still have high – in some cases even increasing – adolescent birth rates, with national minorities most affected. According to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) data in 2013, Tajikistan is the EECCA country with the highest teenage birth rate (54 births per 100 women aged 15–19), followed by Georgia, Azerbaijan, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey (for comparison: Switzerland has a rate of 4).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Fund for Population Activities, *Motherhood in Childhood* (New York, 2013).

111. Roma girls, girls from remote rural areas, girls with disabilities, and girls in penitentiaries or childcare institutions continue to face challenges in accessing health, education and social services in SEE and EECCA countries.

112. The sexualization of girls in the media and sexual abuse and exploitation of girls continue. Eating disorders are more common among girls than boys in EU countries and in Israel.

## IV. Data and statistics, general trends and challenges

### Achievements

113. Important progress was made in the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated statistics and gender sensitive indicators, including data on gender-based violence. Many countries can produce most, if not all, of the United Nations minimum set of gender indicators. Countries produce publications on sex-disaggregated statistics, increasingly on a regular basis. Over the years, EU members have made systematic efforts to develop indicators for each of the areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. Recently, the EIGE has developed a composite indicator, the Gender Equality Index, to provide a reliable statistical tool and benchmarking instrument to monitor progress toward gender equality.<sup>4</sup>

114. Time use surveys have been produced and disseminated in several countries (e.g. fifteen EU member States have contributed to the database of harmonized European time use surveys).

### Challenges

115. Progress in gender statistics is hampered by a lack of resources and political will, particularly in EECCA and SEE. Crucial data gaps remain, particularly in sex-disaggregated gender-based violence and domestic violence data: most countries (except most EU member States) cannot provide the minimum indicators on violence recommended by the United Nations. Even where data exist, they may not be publicly presented in one place. Data on the number and gender of persons affected by domestic violence or on the kinds of violence remain unavailable in many countries.

116. Data gaps widen when definitions of gender-based violence are broadened to encompass victims of forced marriage and honour-related violence, early marriage and sexual harassment in public space. Data on women's access to and control over resources such as land, and on business ownership by women, or data on women infected with HIV and AIDS are often unavailable. Time use surveys are not carried out at all, or not on a regular basis. Data on women with disabilities continues to be limited in EECCA and SEE.

117. Improvements in data are not always accompanied by improved access to gender statistics. Outside of the EU, only a few countries present gender statistics in an easily accessible, user-friendly way.

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<sup>4</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender Equality Index Report* (Vilnius, 2013). Available from <http://eige.europa.eu/apps/gei/content/Gender-Equality-Index-Report.pdf>.

## V. Future priorities

118. The main priorities of the last two decades in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the region remain paramount and are shared across the various subregions:

(a) Strengthening women's economic empowerment, eliminating gender inequality in labour markets, reducing the gender pay gap. Targeted interventions for specific groups of women, e.g. single mothers, elderly women, women affected by poverty, women with disabilities, women from ethnic minorities, women refugees/migrants are of particular interest;

(b) Preventing and eliminating gender-based violence;

(c) Increasing and sustaining women's participation and representation in leadership and decision-making positions.

A number of other issues have also gained importance:

(a) Eradicating persistent stereotypes. The education system at all levels, starting from preschool, should be gender sensitized;

(b) Care and social security, including health, are other priority areas of concern. Initiatives focus on the potential of social security for the promotion of gender equality (e.g. pension systems, maternity protection and the realization of reproductive rights, social assistance and minimum income schemes);

(c) The role of men and boys in the promotion of gender equality is another emerging priority in the ECE region. Initiatives focus on the role of men and boys in the prevention of violence against women, the promotion of non-stereotypical professional choices of young men, or incentives for men to take over a larger share of housework and care responsibilities.

119. Addressing these priorities requires a broad consensus among public and private institutions, civil society at community and country level, academia and international institutions.

120. The post-2015 development agenda with its sustainable development goals (SDGs) will provide an opportunity to include gender as part of a comprehensive and consistent framework and monitor the implementation of respective goals and targets through systematic data collection and a set of specific indicators. The dual role of the ECE region composed of donor countries and recipients of development assistance could be an asset for partnership building in the implementation process.

121. There is a broad consensus in the region to include gender into short-term as well as long-term economic policies, as well as in sustainable development and social inclusion frameworks. To address gaps that were left in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) framework, from a gender perspective, gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of women and girls should be a stand-alone goal, and at the same time be mainstreamed across all aspects of the post-2015 development framework. This approach is proposed in the set of the proposal for sustainable development goals that was adopted by the Open Working Group (OWG) on 19 July 2014. The challenge will be to maintain all of these proposed commitments in the final, globally negotiated post-2015 development agenda.