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**Smart investments: financing for gender equality****Financing for gender equality as an accelerator for the Sustainable Development Goals implementation in the ECE Region****Note by UN Women<sup>1</sup>***Summary*

Adequate, sustained and comprehensive financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women remains one of the single greatest barriers to the realization of commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main progress around gender-responsive macroeconomic policies in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region is around investments in social care infrastructure. Nonetheless, significant gaps continue particularly in support for child-care, elderly care and shared parental responsibilities.

The use of gender responsive budgeting as a tool to ensure both enhanced transparency and enhanced commitment towards gender equality and the empowerment of women is gaining traction, with important legislative and budgetary procedures being adopted. There has been important progress in the last five years in terms of closing the national data gaps which challenge all efforts to ensure financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women. However, more is required to understand how/if gender equality and the empowerment of women gains are translating into a real and lived change for all women.

Partnerships with the Ministries of Finance, local authorities, national gender equality/women's machineries, parliamentarians, local authorities and civil society to advance financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women has grown in recent years in many countries. The lack of sustained financing and limited human resources allocated to national gender equality/women's machineries and the women's movement hinders advocating for change.

<sup>1</sup> The present document was submitted late due to delay in inputs from partner organizations.

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## I. Introduction

1. Building on the commitments and norms enshrined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require a lived equality for all. These international commitments demand policies, services and budgets provisions that tackle inequalities and the intersecting nature of discrimination – gender, age, geography, ethnicity, disabilities, orientation, civil status and degree of statelessness, to name a few.

2. Implementing the SDGs require the countries of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) to scratch beneath the surface of the region’s relatively strong human development indicators, national capacities, and non-discriminatory national legislative and regulatory frameworks. The ECE Regional Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +25 Review provides countries the opportunity to take stock and assess the gains made under the Beijing Platform for Action, the risks to progress, and the continuing gaps and obstacles to realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women. Gains and obstacles to Beijing Platform for Action implementation are gains and obstacles to the realization of the SDGs.

3. Adequate, sustained and comprehensive financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women remains one of the single greatest barriers to the realization of commitments taken under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the SDGs. As part of the regional review of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the present document reveals the interconnected components of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the region, specifically: a) the impact gender-responsive macroeconomic policies and inclusive economic growth policies can have in advancing Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs in a country and the trends in the region; b) the essential role gender-responsive budgeting, including gender-responsive Public Financial Management systems are playing to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in the region; c) the degree to which Aid assistance flows in the region have impacted gender equality and the empowerment of women; d) the crucial role Government – Non-Governmental – Private Sector partnerships play in advancing the Beijing Platform for Action under the framework of the SDGs, and finally, e) the critical role data, analysis and systematic monitoring play in financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The document concludes with recommendations for future action.

## II. Regional Trends

### A. Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - Macroeconomic and Social Policies

4. Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women through macroeconomic policies typically refers to a government’s taxation, fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies. They may also, however, include e measures taken by government to invest its revenue back into society. Globally, economists are deepening research around the concept of an inclusive macroeconomic framework. Studies and analyses is now looking at measures which promote “broadly shared well-being, measured not only by GDP growth but also by achievement of secure livelihoods, rising living standards and expansion of capabilities.”<sup>2</sup> The interlinked and interdependent goals of such policies - in addition to gender equality in the areas of capabilities, livelihoods, agency, and security - would include full employment; class/caste and racial/ethnic equality; economic stability; and the promotion of a green economy<sup>3</sup>.

5. Physical infrastructure investment (i.e. spending on clean water, sanitation transport, and health clinics) can reduce women’s unpaid care burdens. Investment into social care

<sup>2</sup> Seguino, Stephanie (2016), UN Women Discussion Paper: *Financing for Gender Equality in the Context of the SDGs*, p. 5

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

infrastructure significantly and positively impacts women’s economic engagement. Social care infrastructure refers to the “fundamental social, intellectual, and emotional skills, and health of individuals—or level of human development—a country relies on for its economy to function.”<sup>4</sup> While there is greater awareness in the region on the benefit of social care infrastructure and social care policies on women’s economic participation, both types of infrastructure investment are essential, and there is limited evidence of increased investment in gender-responsive physical infrastructure in the majority of countries.

6. Beyond being a goal into itself, macroeconomic policies which promote gender equality and the empowerment of women also result in increased economic dynamism, and increased employment opportunities for all. Conversely, macroeconomic decisions may also bring out economic crises, with women and men experiencing the negative impacts differently because of the differing roles they play. A reduction in social spending as part of austerity measures or budgetary measures to treat with slow economic growth may increase the demands on women’s unpaid care work in the home.<sup>5</sup>

7. It is increasingly understood among governments in the region that the disproportionate share of unpaid care work borne by women is a critical barrier to their economic participation and security. A number of European Union (EU) Member States and Canada have within the last five years adopted components of what feminist economists have termed the “3R” strategy – recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work<sup>6</sup>. In tackling the issue of unpaid care work in the home, countries would be advancing multiple SDG targets in the areas of gender equality, decent employment generation, reduction of poverty and inequalities.

8. In addition to improvements in some EU Member States and Canada to already somewhat strong social care policies the National Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +25 Reviews indicate somewhat increased investments in the same throughout Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, the CIS, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Social care investments in these sub-regions have included improved access to subsidized childcare and kindergarten, and access to subsidized elderly care. More commonly, a number of countries in East and Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus, the CIS and Central Asia have recently adopted improved maternity, paternity and parental leave benefits. Since 2015, some countries have strengthened policies around improved access and eligibility for self-employed women to state pensions; increasing linkages between support to survivors of gender-based violence and social security, and more child/gender responsive non-contributory social welfare systems.

9. Limited comprehensive national data around the impact of social care policies in the majority of countries in the above sub-regions, as well as in Canada, the United States of America and the EU continue to challenge any assessment of how/if all groups in the country are benefiting from these measures. Despite some positive advances, women throughout the region continue to carry the weight of unpaid care work. This coupled with the negative impacts of gender norms and gender-based discrimination, and other forms of discrimination based on age, geography, ethnicity, disabilities, civil status, to name a few, challenge women and young women’s full realization of their potential. These factors have also contributed to a persistent wage gap between women and men in the region.

10. The rise of populism in a number of countries throughout the ECE region and its rhetoric has been creating a negative attitude towards human rights and gender equality and the empowerment of women. As the Council of Europe (CoE) has stated – and as holds for many countries throughout the ECE region - economic downturns and/or austerity, combined with this rhetoric, has resulted in “growing unpopularity of policies and measures promoting diversity and social inclusion, and in decisions to reduce budgets for such policies, for national human rights institutions and equality bodies, limiting the independence of these bodies.”<sup>7</sup> Economic downturns may nominally be a driver resulting in limited national budgetary allocations towards ending all forms of inequalities, including gender-based

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> UN Women (2017), Policy Brief No.4: *Why Macroeconomic Policy Matters for Gender Equality*, p. 1

<sup>6</sup> UN Women, UNDP (2017), Policy Brief 2017/01, *Investing in Social Care for Gender Equality and Inclusive Growth in Europe and Central Asia*, p. 1

<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe (2018), *Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe - State of Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law – Role of Institutions. Threats to Institutions*, p. 83

inequalities. However, trends in some countries speak to a lack of political will to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women which pre-dates the global economic crisis of 2008.

## **B. Aid Financing Flows for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the ECE Region**

11. Having gender-responsive macroeconomic policies is essential – as is ensuring financing to allow for the full impact of these policies. National budgetary allocations are therefore key – as are official development assistance flows coming into the country. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the SDGs, require official development assistance allocations to both support commitments taken on gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as more transparently track flows. And while regional trends since 2015 do not indicate any significant change in the former, there is marked improvement in the latter with the majority of ECE countries who are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) now all consistently and more accurately applying its Gender Equality Marker.<sup>8</sup>

12. The ECE region is unique in that it contains the largest contributors to official development assistance worldwide, as well as a number of recipient countries. Further, there is considerable regional impact of EU and European Commission funding instruments for both EU Member States and ECE countries falling within the Pre-Accession or Neighbourhood Policy frameworks.

13. In 2016-2017, the 30 members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)<sup>9</sup> saw the highest level of funds ever committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women, with an average of USD 44.8 billion per year committed worldwide. (See figure 1)<sup>10</sup> This corresponds to 38 per cent of bilateral allocable aid, focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women “as either a significant or principal objective... However, 62 per cent of aid remains gender blind.”<sup>11</sup> Of the 38 per cent bilateral allocable aid focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women, only 4 per cent has it as a principal focus.<sup>12</sup>

14. From the region, the following OECD DAC members focused 50 per cent or more of their aid on gender equality as either a principal or significant objective: Sweden, Ireland, Iceland, Canada, the Netherlands, Finland, Belgium and Italy<sup>13</sup>. OECD DAC members from the ECE region whose contributions towards gender equality and the empowerment of women are below the average are Hungary, Poland, US, Norway, Portugal, Luxembourg, France, Denmark, Slovenia, and the Slovak Republic.<sup>14</sup> The trends in gender allocations vary across the region: Germany, Sweden and Luxembourg reported an increase in gender equality focused aid by 7, 5 and 2 percentage points respectively between 2014-2015. In turn, Denmark, Norway and the United Kingdom reported a decrease in gender equality focused aid between 2014 and 2015 – 3, 9 and 20 percentage points respectively.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A Gender Equality Marker is a tool used by organizations to track planned or actual financial investments on gender equality and the empowerment of women within programmes, projects or overall aid packages. A GEM uses codes (i.e. 0, 1, 2, 3) to denote the degree to which the investment focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women. In the case of OECD DAC’s GEM, the figures above refer to those programmes which have had a GEM coding of significant focus (secondary) or principle focus (primary) on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

<sup>9</sup> Includes member States outside of the ECE region – Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand.

<sup>10</sup> OECD Development Cooperation Directorate (DAC/GENDERNET) (2019). *Development Finance for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: A Snapshot*. p. 1

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

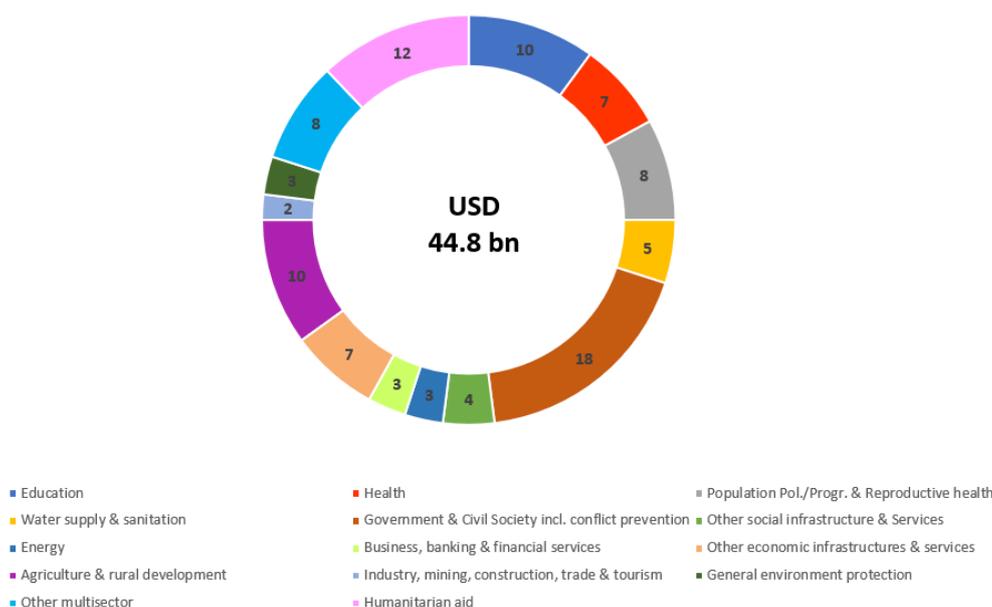
<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>13</sup> OECD DAC/GENDERNET (2019), *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment – Donor Charts*, p. 3

<sup>14</sup> OECD Development Cooperation Directorate (DAC)/GENDERNET (2019), *Development Finance for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: A Snapshot*, p. 3

<sup>15</sup> UN Women (2018), *Turning Promises into Action: Factsheet for Europe and North America*. Published by UN Women, p. 5

**Figure 1. Gender Equality Focus of OECD DAC Members' Aid by Sector (average over 2016-2017 period)** <sup>16</sup>



15. The overall top performers in terms of contributing aid directly to Women's Equality Institutions and organizations are Sweden, EU Institutions<sup>17</sup>, the Netherlands, Norway, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

16. Most of gender equality and the empowerment of women-focused aid from ECE donors is not going to other ECE recipient countries, but to least developed, fragile, post-conflict, and humanitarian crisis countries worldwide. In the ECE region, the main recipients of gender equality and the empowerment of women-focused aid from OECD Development Assistance Committee members are Turkey and Kosovo<sup>19</sup>, followed by Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova.<sup>20</sup>

### C. Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Public Finance Management – Tools for Change

17. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action requires, through public finance management reform and improved data collection, governments' investment in gender equality and the empowerment of women to be systematically and transparently monitored. To this end, gender-responsive budgeting is an “an innovative public policy tool for assessing

<sup>16</sup> OECD DAC/GENDERNET (2019). *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – Donor Charts*. p. 2. OECD DAC Note on information reflected in this chart and in the above figures “As from 2010 data, the calculation of allocable aid is no longer based on sectors but on types of aid. The calculation includes the following types of aid: sector budget support, core support to NGOs, support to specific funds managed by international organisations, pooled funding, projects, donor country personnel and other technical assistance, and scholarships in donor country. The term bilateral allocable aid in this publication refers to this methodology. A two-year average is given, as the focus and volume of commitments vary from year to year.”

<sup>17</sup> Above figures pertaining to the European Union's institutions cover external action programme track spending and not key funding sources for the ECE region such as the EU budgetary processes for Pre-Accession Assistance, European Neighbourhood Instrument, Development Cooperation Instrument or the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, to name a few. Source – European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2018), pp. 21 and 22.

<sup>18</sup> OECD DAC/GENDERNET (2019). *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – Donor Charts*, p. 4

<sup>19</sup> This and all other references to Kosovo in this document shall be understood to be in full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

<sup>20</sup> Based on a desk-top review of the charts provided by the OECD DAC/GENDERNET (2019) Publication *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – Donor Charts*.

the impact of policies and budgets from a gender perspective and for ensuring that policies and their accompanied budgets do not perpetuate gender inequalities but contribute to more equal society for women and men. Gender-responsive budgeting aims to close the “implementation gap”.<sup>21</sup>

18. While some countries in the region have indicated an increase in the allocation of national budgets to address gender-based violence and reconciling work life/family life responsibilities since 2015, there is limited monitoring of national budgetary allocations from a gender equality and the empowerment of women perspective. In this time frame, Governments in the EU, East and Southeast Europe, and to a lesser extent some countries in the Caucasus have adopted gender-responsive Budget Laws, which require gender-responsive budgeting as an obligation in the planning, implementation, execution and reporting of budgets. Through key partnerships with the Ministries of Finance, gender-responsive budgeting measures have been integrated into Public Finance Management Reforms. Through these processes, coordination and communication between Ministries of Finance, national gender equality/women’s machineries and line Ministries has been significantly improved.

19. National capacities have been strengthened throughout key Ministries, the national gender equality/women’s machineries and local government bodies. National monitoring tools have been developed to ensure effective implementation of gender-responsive budgeting requirements now contained within the budgetary laws and Ministries of Finance directives. Focus has also been on improving capacities of Members of Parliament (MPs) to review proposed budgets and budget performance using gender lens. Investments by international organizations has also resulted in improved capacities and positioning of civil society to monitor governments’ accountability towards gender equality and the empowerment of women through gender-responsive budgeting methodologies, including budget tracking.

20. Much of the above gender-responsive budgeting work has resulted in governments developing more human-centered policies with a focus on leaving no one behind and decreasing gender inequalities. Additionally, there has been increased sub-regional cooperation in South East Europe on, exchanging lessons learned and best practices on gender-responsive budgeting.<sup>22</sup>

### **III. Progress**

#### **A. Investing in Social Care Policies**

21. In the last five years, the adoption and/or revision of paternity leave and maternity leave benefits in a number of countries throughout the ECE region is an important factor balancing out the work/family responsibilities of women. Parental leave sharing is increasingly used in a number of EU countries. For example, in the last five years, the United Kingdom allows working parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay in the first year following the birth of a child. National Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +25 Reviews show that in some EU countries, the expansion of childcare and eldercare support and facilities were undertaken throughout the region, including through the use of State subsidies and tax deductions. In Austria, 156 weeks of childcare allowance are provided for women returning to employment or participating in job-training programmes.

#### **B. Gender-Responsive Budgeting – National Capacities and Achievements**

22. The above regional trends around gender-responsive budgeting show a marked increase in the use of accountability tools and methodologies by governments, primarily

<sup>21</sup> Government of Serbia/ UN Women Serbia (2019), *Introduction of Gender-Responsive Budgeting in the Republic of Serbia*, p. 1

<sup>22</sup> UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (2019), *Fact Sheet – Gender Responsive Budgeting: Highlights from the UN Women Regional Programme for South East Europe and the Republic of Moldova*.

through the technical support of international organizations and funding from EU countries. Over the last five years, a key area of progress is the leadership role Ministries of Finance have taken in some East and Southeast Europe countries to institute gender-responsive budgeting measures, working in partnership with national gender equality/women's machineries which have traditionally been relegated to the margins of government discussions around national budgets.

23. In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting are now part of the Budgetary Laws of the countries; gender-responsive budget preparation instructions and gender-responsive performance indicators have been adopted within the budgetary processes. In the Republic of North Macedonia, all line ministries are required to develop at least one gender indicator in their strategic plans, including analysis of the situation and the impact on the lives of women and men. In Serbia, the government has established a support hub in 2015, responsible for gender-responsive budgeting planning, implementation and monitoring.

24. In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia, civil servants in line ministries, members of Parliament, local authorities, academia, and civil society representatives have all been trained on gender-responsive budgeting tools and methodologies. In Moldova, a gender-responsive budgeting module was included into the curriculum of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova in 2016 and the Academy for Public Administration developed a Gender Equality Course for Civil Servants in 2018. Through the work of UN Women and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe, a sub-regionally accessible E-module on Gender Equality and gender-responsive budgeting was developed, to be used by local authorities. Further, the Ministry for Information Society and Administration in the Republic of North Macedonia was the first in the region to integrate a tailored E-course on gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting into its Learning Management System.

25. Local-level authorities and services have received considerable capacity development on how to utilize key gender-responsive budgeting strategies and tools to assess local level policies and budgetary processes, as well as the impact of national policies in this regard. This has helped in identifying how/if central-level policies impact different groups and regions within a country. Civil society organizations in a number of countries have also supported the inclusion of often marginalized women's voices in budget and policy processes.<sup>23</sup> In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women from rural areas are now benefiting from the allocation of state funds to increase their economic participation and security. Women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence from the municipality of Bratunac now participate in the development of the municipal budget, with two dedicated allocations and guaranteed for the coming years.

26. The Serbian Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure and the Provincial Secretariat for Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry conducted sectoral gender analyses to inform sectoral policy decisions. The Republic of North Macedonia, 17-line ministries/state institutions have prepared Gender Budget statements and made them publicly available at the official websites of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the line ministries. In Austria, efforts have been made to ensure transparent, comparable and reliable budgetary indicators on gender equality are listed by each line ministry under the federal budget. This information is shared publicly on the website of the Federal Ministry of Finance. Since 2016, the government has also established the "Gender Budgeting Blog" to provide specialist information gender-responsive budgeting.<sup>24</sup>

27. In Central Asia, a partnership of Ministries of Health, members of Parliament, mandatory health insurance funds, health-care providers, civil society organizations and UNFPA have undertaken advocacy efforts at the regional and national levels to highlight the challenges faced by the most vulnerable women in accessing modern contraception, with the

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<sup>23</sup> This and the details which follow of work in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia and Serbia are extracted from a review of UN Women knowledge products and reports under its Regional Programme "Promoting Gender-Responsive Policies in South East Europe" 2017-2019

<sup>24</sup> Government of Austria (2019). *National-level Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing +25*, p. 57

aim of increasing the allocation of funds from state budgets for contraceptive procurement. As a result, in 2018, for the first time since Kyrgyzstan's independence, government allocated funds to procure contraceptives. The Government of Tajikistan's 2018 national budget included a 10% increase in funding allocation towards family planning services, including outreach, contraceptive procurement and increasing the number of family planning sources.<sup>25</sup>

28. Through EU directives and national-level initiatives, some EU countries have had formal requirements to implement gender-responsive budgeting tools for number of years. In 2016, OECD conducted a survey on Gender Budgeting for its member countries. Almost half of OECD countries that responded (15 out of 34 members) reported that they had introduced gender-responsive budgeting measures - from the ECE region, this included Austria, Belgium, Finland, Iceland, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden; or planned to introduce gender-responsive budgeting measures - Italy; or were actively considering the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting measures - Turkey and the Czech Republic.<sup>26</sup> In Turkey, initial awareness raising initiatives have been carried out and a commitment was taken under the 10<sup>th</sup> national Development Plan (2014-2018) to advance gender-responsive budgeting.

29. Some lessons learned on gender-responsive budgeting processes in the region have emerged in recent years. Firstly, gender-responsive budgeting requires a coordinated approach between the bodies responsible for finance and budget within government, National Statistical Offices, members of Parliament, local authorities, the national gender equality/women's machineries and civil society organizations including academia.<sup>27</sup> Establishing these partnerships takes time, even when the majority of key players are all part of government. In addition, the near constant marginalization of national gender equality/women's machineries from so many key budgeting and decision-making processes further challenges the establishment of these partnerships. Once established though, as the above examples illustrate, the impact on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women can be considerable. Secondly, establishing gender-responsive budgeting methodologies usually requires legislation, followed by a series of regulatory measures and directives issued by the budgeting authority in country, generally the Ministry of Finance.<sup>28</sup> Thirdly, significant investment is required to build the capacities of the key partners in gender-responsive budgeting to understand the tools and methodologies, but also to understand the gender equality and the empowerment of women concepts and international commitments taken under the CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the SDGs. Fourthly, mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women into broader sectoral processes through using gender-responsive budgeting tools require gender analyses to be carried out in almost all circumstances, particularly given the lack of comprehensive data which many ECE countries face when working on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Lastly, ensuring a leading role of the Ministries of Finance in the gender-responsive budgeting process is crucial.

### C. Partnership and Alliances in support of Financing for Gender Equality

30. In recent years, both in the area of gender-responsive budgeting and overall development assistance allocation towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, the ECE region has seen some emerging public-private partnerships, together with strengthened government/civil society coordination in advocating for financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women. While the state holds the primary responsibility for implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the SDGs, the robust implementation of both require enhanced partnerships with private sector, media, academia, and between government and civil society. Further, and of equal importance, the effective implementation of both the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and SDGs require the national gender equality/women's machineries and national human rights mechanisms to

<sup>25</sup> UNFPA and UNECE (2018), *Fulfilling the Potential of Present and Future Generations: Report on ICPD Programme of Action (+25) Implementation in the UNECE Region*, p. 59 – 60

<sup>26</sup> OECD – prepared by Downes, Ronnie, Lisa von Trapp and Scherie Nicol (2017), *Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate Gender Budgeting in OECD countries – OECD Journal on Budgeting*, Volume 2016/3, p. 2

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 3

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

have the authority, clarity of remit, capacities, partnerships and financial and human resources to effectively monitor the government's commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

31. The national gender equality/women's machineries remain as challenged as they were in 1995 in terms of resource allocation, authority and their relative marginalization within government decision-making processes. Nonetheless, over the last ten years, staff of the national gender equality/women's machineries have significantly deepened their skills, knowledge and tools around the monitoring of international norms and standards, including within the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and SDGs, and on gender-responsive budgeting. The national gender equality/women's machineries in many countries have leveraged the central government's launching of SDG monitoring and implementation to increase their role in state statistical development and deepening national analysis of the status of women and men against international commitments.

32. Despite numerous challenges, the women's movement in each country in the region continues to have a long and running dialogue with the national gender equality/women's machineries exchanging knowledge, capacities and tools. Throughout the region, civil society organizations continue to provide a significant number of services to women living in the margins, including women from the LGBTI community, Roma women, women and girls living with disabilities, refugee women, migrant women, as well as survivors of gender-based violence and trafficking. In Canada, the United States of America, and the EU, civil society organizations often provide these services through government subsidies. In East and Southeast Europe, the Caucasus, the CIS and Central Asia, government subsidies or financing for these services is very limited, despite the fact that in many countries in these sub-regions, civil society organizations are the only providers of services to women in the margins. While this government/ civil society relationship is often tenuous, it has been relatively constant, given the limited resources both the national gender equality/women's machineries and civil society organizations have and the common issues they tackle.

33. Establishing public-private partnerships in support of Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women has gained small traction in the region since 2015. In the United States, Canada and many Western European countries, there has been emerging buy-in by private sector around the concept of "Impact Investments" – the "simple idea...that for-profit investments are both an economically effective and a morally appropriate way to address a social problem,"<sup>29</sup> While not a new concept – indeed cooperatives have worked around these principles for generations – however over the past ten years, the size of the impact investment model has grown and is now estimated to be at US \$502 billion globally with over 1,300 organizations supporting impact investments, according to the Global Impact Investing Network, a nonprofit seeking to remove barriers to social investments.<sup>30</sup> The rationale for many players in Impact Investments is that it is – first and foremost – an untapped market and business investment, and that better living for conditions for all results in economic growth for all.

34. In a number of countries in the region, with the adoption of the SDGs, private sector/government and civil society dialogue are increasing around the shared responsibility under Agenda 2030. Countries throughout all the ECE region have signed off on the Women's Empowerment Principles, a set of principles designed to facilitate women's empowerment in workplaces across industries, as well as mobilize social responsibility efforts by institutions and organizations, regardless of their scale. The Women's Empowerment Principles include a gap analysis tool developed to provide businesses with a free user-friendly and confidential self-assessment of their performance on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Launched in March 2017, within just one year, 23 per cent of all global users of this tool were from the Europe region.<sup>31</sup> Despite a significant number of Women's Empowerment Principles signatories being based in the region, detailed best

<sup>29</sup> Wharton, University of Pennsylvania (2019), "Knowledge @ Wharton". *Impact Investing's Third Phase: What New Challenges Lie Ahead?* (<https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/whats-next-for-impact-investing/>).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> UN Global Compact/UN Women/IDB/Multilateral Investment Fund. (2018), *Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Global Trends Report 2018*, p. 2-3

practices, however, are yet to be well documented region wide. Through the UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Working Group for Turkey/UN Women partnerships, Turkey has developed a detailed Implementation Guide to the Women's Empowerment Principles. This guide assists the 283 companies in Turkey which have signed on to the Principles, making Turkey first in Women's Empowerment Principles signatory companies globally.<sup>32</sup> Several companies, that signed Women's Empowerment Principles in Turkey within the last three years have also started implementing concrete initiatives to promote gender equality, zero tolerance for violence against women and women's leadership. Among some signatories, plans for child-care services (in-office or subsidies) and measures to be more LGBTI+ sensitive were initiated, to be implemented in 2019.

35. In 2016, Georgia joined the MenCare Global Campaign in 2016, supported by UNFPA, the civil society organization We Care, Promundo, the Government of Sweden, the Georgian Football Federation and FC Locomotive. The campaign's focus has been to increase understanding around masculinities, increasing men's share of unpaid care work in the home, and working together to end all forms of gender-based violence including sexual violence.<sup>33</sup> Also in Georgia, the private telecommunications company GeoCell has committed to using a 2017 government-adopted e-learning course for the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace within its own operations.<sup>34</sup> In Denmark, Public-Private partnerships in recent years has been focused on promoting gender equality in education – overcoming gender stereotypes in primary and lower secondary schools, enhancing girls and young women's interest in STEM education.<sup>35</sup> In Kazakhstan, joint stock companies, in partnership with state financial bodies and national development fund institutions are implementing a joint project funded by the European Investment Bank which focuses on offering capacity development to women – including rural women – on how to startup businesses which promote and use green technologies.<sup>36</sup>

#### D. Data and Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

36. The adoption of the SDGs has generated new momentum around closing national data gaps around a range of issues pertaining to social justice, equality and inclusion – and gender equality is a key aspect of this. Many national gender equality/women's machineries throughout the region are leveraging government's investments in monitoring the SDGs to improve data, which is disaggregated by gender, age, geography, and ethnicities.

37. In the last ten years, there have been improvements in the quality and regularity of national data collected in ECE. A number of countries in the region have developed or updated prevalence data on gender-based violence, generally with the technical and financial support of international organizations. There is improved data in the region on access to contraceptives and reproductive health needs. Women and men's labour force participation rates are more systematically collected in most countries in the region. Some countries have generated at-risk of poverty rates disaggregated by gender. Most countries in the region have strengthened their education data – mainly in the areas of primary, secondary and tertiary enrollment and retention rates, disaggregated by gender.

38. In 2015, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe published "Indicators of gender equality"<sup>37</sup> where gender relevant statistical indicators for the UNECE region are systematized in a framework of headline and supporting indicators for the domains covered in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The UNECE Statistical Database<sup>38</sup> contains data for many of these indicators and provides further statistics from the gender

<sup>32</sup> UN Women and the Global Compact Network (2017) Turkey, *Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Implementation Guide: Equality Means Business*, p. 13-14

<sup>33</sup> UNFPA and ECE (2018), ICPD +25 Regional Review, p. 86-87

<sup>34</sup> Government of Georgia (2019), National-level Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing +25, p. 12

<sup>35</sup> Government of Denmark (2019), National-level Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing +25, p. 6

<sup>36</sup> Government of Kazakhstan (2019), National-level Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing +25, p. 80

<sup>37</sup> Available at [www.unece.org/index.php?id=38461](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=38461)

<sup>38</sup> Available at [www.unece.org/data](http://www.unece.org/data)

perspective in areas such as families and households, work and the economy, work-life balance, education, public life and decision-making, crime and violence, science and information and communication technology, health and mortality, population and fertility. The OECD has a Gender Data Portal which includes selected indicators on gender inequalities in education, employment and entrepreneurship as well as a Gender, Institutions and Development Database. The World Bank portal for gender equality data and statistics includes gender datasets from the United Nations, as well as World Bank conducted or funded surveys and reports for the region.<sup>39</sup> In 2014, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) launched the EU Gender Equality Index, which synthesizes data on gender equality from a number of different domains in alignment with Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action requirements.

## IV. Challenges

### A. Investing in Social Care Infrastructure

39. A fundamental requirement for financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women is first and foremost, political will. Maintaining that political will – and seeing it translate into actual policy change and financial allocations under the national budgets, even in times of austerity and slow economic growth, remains a significant challenge in the region. Populist movements in some countries have fostered, a backlash to progress around a number of social justice issues related to equality and inclusion. Polarizing statements and approaches by both the elected administrations and social influencers are resulting in a number of gender equality and the empowerment of women gains being lost in some countries ; as a result of the alleged “risk” posed to “family values” when advancing women’s rights to live equal to men and to live free of violence; or advancing women and adolescent girls’ access to sexual and reproductive health services. LGBTI communities in many countries in ECE region continue to be under threat; the voices of youth remain marginalized in many of these contexts.

40. Despite improvements in the region following the 2008 economic crisis, some countries remain fiscally restrained. In such an environment, public financial investment into social justice and inclusion issues are often the first to be cut, with the short-sighted view that they do not generate economic growth but only “cost”. As the above analysis around macroeconomic policies, impact investments and engaging the private sector has shown – social justice and inclusion are “good for business”. Any economic measures taken during times of economic slowdown or austerity which exacerbate inequalities will only have a long-term, negative cost to the country in terms of sustainable development and growth.

41. Throughout the region, policies may be in place to support components of unpaid care work yet they – and the institutions mandated to implement these policies – are often poorly financed. These budgets are often the first to be hit in the face of austerity measures and contracting economies. Therefore, despite advances around investing on social care infrastructure listed above, there remains a persistent lack of quality day care, kindergartens, or childcare/elderly care subsidies throughout the region.

42. Regional trends align with global trends in that the decision-making around macroeconomic policies in the region lack the participation of women’s non-governmental organizations. Despite investments by international organizations in a number of countries around gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming, and despite increased awareness about the need to reconcile work/life responsibilities, national gender equality/women’s machineries and civil society organizations often lack the capacities, partnerships and resources to advocate around gender-responsive macroeconomic policies in the region. Further, civil society organizations and national women’s movements continue to struggle in the region to access sustained, multi-year financial resources. In many countries, shrinking space for state-civil society dialogue challenges the role they have played since 1995 in both advocating for and monitoring the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

<sup>39</sup> UNECE (2014), *Beijing +20 Regional Review Meeting: Trends in Gender Equality in the ECE Region*, ECE/AC.28/2014, Paragraph 3.

## **B. Monitoring Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**

43. Both the CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stipulate that the necessary conditions for national gender equality/women's machineries to be fully functional are: a) location at the highest possible level in the Government; b) institutional mechanisms or processes that facilitate decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring with a view to involving civil society organizations from the grass-roots upwards; c) sufficient resources in terms of budget and professional capacity; and d) opportunity to influence development of all government policies.

44. To date, throughout the ECE region, there are very few national gender equality/women's machineries which operate under such favorable conditions. Since 1995, the main gain of national gender equality/women's machineries has been: their partnerships within government and with civil society; the increase in nationally relevant/generated gender equality and the empowerment of women knowledge and tools; and some significant gains in the area of sex-disaggregated data and overall analysis of the status of women and men and the implementation of international norms and commitments such as the CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the International Conference on Population and Development. For some national gender equality/women's machineries, the election of new government administrations may result in considerable restructuring of the machinery or challenge the existence of the structure itself. High staff turnover also is a continuous challenge among national gender equality/women's machineries in the region. As a result, civil society in a number of ECE countries tend to hold much of the "institutional memory" of the gains, challenges and needs in realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

45. With the above capacity limitations in mind, maintaining an enabling environment in support of Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women requires the sustained capacities of key government bodies, local officials, members of Parliament, statistical divisions, and civil society. The majority of investments on capacity development to date have been by international organizations, and this needs to shift so that national budgets are investing in the capacity development of national gender equality/women's machineries and line ministries.

46. EU policies and directives adopted by EU Member States and EU institutions can potentially play an important role in ensuring an enabling environment for financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women in parts of the ECE region. The opportunities for EU institutions to promote strong gender equality and the empowerment of women norms through such mechanisms as the Pre-accession instruments and the Neighbourhood Policy are considerable. Reviews of EU budget, along with its related processes and instruments such as the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), the European Semester and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), shows there have not been any significant inroads in mainstreaming gender equality nor in contributing towards gender equality and the empowerment of women issues, despite impressive performances around gender equality and the empowerment of women among a few EU Member States.<sup>40</sup> A recent EU Parliamentary Report reminds the European Commission of the declaration on gender budgeting and the need to establish gender-specific indicators for monitoring of the EU Budget and assessing the impact of its financing on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Further, the EU Parliament has called for an increase in the share of European Structural and Investment Funds dedicated services such as affordable childcare and care for the elderly.<sup>41</sup>

## **C. Data and Financing for Gender Equality and Empowering Women – Making the Case**

47. An essential requirement at the national level to ensure a real and lived gender equality is the existence of high-quality, systematic and comprehensive collection of disaggregated

<sup>40</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2018), *Gender Budgeting: Mainstreaming gender into the EU Budget and Macroeconomic Policy Framework*, p. 8

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 22

national data which is made available to the general public and which is used to inform policy formulation, monitor implementation, and assess policy impact and remaining gaps. Since 1995, there has been important but intermittent progress in this regard throughout the region, and in many countries of the region, closing the data gap on gender equality and the empowerment of women has largely relied on financing and technical assistance provided by international organizations.

48. Despite the above advances in the region on closing the gender data gap, the availability of data necessary for the global monitoring of gender-specific indicators is “at a mere 29.2% in Europe and Northern America, while the availability of trend data (as in, data available for at least two points in time) is even lower, at 18.5%. Unless gender is mainstreamed into national statistical strategies, gender data scarcity will persist”.<sup>42</sup>

49. Data gaps remain in the following areas<sup>43</sup>:

- a. information on women’s access to and control over assets including land, business ownership and bank accounts;
- b. time use and the scope of unsupported and unpaid care work in the home;
- c. prevalence data on gender-based violence, including sexual violence;
- d. the gender equality and the empowerment of women challenges facing refugee women and girls in the ECE region;
- e. the needs and challenges facing LGBTI communities throughout the region;
- f. the prevalence of child marriage and/or early co-habitation;
- g. the comprehensive coverage and impact of age appropriate sexuality education programmes;
- h. rates and groups experiencing adolescent and teenage pregnancies;
- i. HIV rates throughout the region, and the level of HIV knowledge among adolescents and youth;
- j. the SRH (sexual and reproductive health) needs of older persons;
- k. overall availability of data on adolescent health;

50. Overall, there is limited data to assess how policies are impacting people living in the margins – LGBTI, ethnic minorities, refugees, migrants, persons with disabilities. Limited capacity for gender analysis among line ministries results in raw data not being processed using a gender lens. Further, more data does not always translate into improved access of the data by key users, including civil society and academia. This may, in part, be linked to certain parts of government wanting to minimize flow of certain data sets pertaining to economic growth, minority groups, or overall development trends. It is also linked to government administrative cultures which may not promote information sharing between ministries or government departments; and a belief in some governments that civil society organizations represent “opposition” and should not be given access to key data sets.

## V. Priority Actions

51. Based on the findings of this review, the following priority actions on Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the ECE region are recommended:

- a. With support of international organizations, countries in the region should undertake a gendered analysis of labour markets to assess the links between paid and unpaid work;
- b. Governments need to improve overall analysis of how their investments in physical infrastructure and social care infrastructure are benefiting both men and women equally, including all groups within the country;
- c. Based on these types of analyses, governments must increase the use of performance budgeting whereby specific indicators are set in support of national gender equality and the empowerment of women priorities, including reconciling work/family responsibilities.

<sup>42</sup> UN Women (2018), *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda – Factsheet for Europe and North America*, p. 6

<sup>43</sup> UNFPA and UNECE (2018), *Fulfilling the Potential of Present and Future Generations: Report on ICPD Programme of Action (+25) Implementation in the UNECE Region*, p. 118-125

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- d. Conduct costing exercises based on the national priorities identified for gender equality and the empowerment of women, so as to build a social care infrastructure with universal coverage, while assessing the immediate costs of investments in social care infrastructure against their long-term benefits.
  - e. Assess fiscal space in central and local budgets, once targets are set for social care service expansion.<sup>44</sup>
  - f. Increased investment by governments and international organizations is required to close the data gaps at the national level;
  - g. Continue to deepen gender-responsive governance capacities throughout government institutions, Parliament and within civil society and academia.
  - h. National gender equality/women's machineries should be governed by legislation which ensures their clarity of authority and remit as outlined by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and CEDAW General Recommendations;
  - i. National gender equality/women's machineries should be reliably, systematically and sufficiently resourced through the national budget with financial and human resources;
  - j. Ensure that consistent and sustained financial and technical support is provided to civil society organizations representing a broad range of stakeholders so they have the capacities and resources to monitor the gains and challenges in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, SDGs, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and UN CEDAW in particular.
  - k. Grassroots civil society should be provided a particular space within national gender-responsive budgeting processes, so as to ensure the needs of women, men, girls and boys from some of the most vulnerable communities are factored into budgetary.
  - l. Systematize the partnerships between national statistical offices, national gender equality/women's machineries, civil society, academia, as well as youth and marginalized groups so as to ensure greater relevance, use and application of data generated.

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<sup>44</sup> UN Women, UNDP (2017), Policy Brief 2017/01, *Investing in Social Care for Gender Equality and Inclusive Growth in Europe and Central Asia*, p. 4