



20th Anniversary of the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan

Stories of change

Working together for gender equality

As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the OSCE Gender Action Plan, we proudly introduce a collection of success stories as testament of the OSCE's unwavering commitment to promoting gender equality and empowering women. Celebrating this milestone, we reflect on the remarkable progress achieved in advancing gender equality across the OSCE and beyond. United by our shared vision and collaborative efforts, we press forward, striving to build a brighter, more equitable future for all.

OSCE Key Commitments

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE OSCE

- a. Gender-mainstreaming in organizational practices, working environment and recruitment
- b. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into OSCE activities, policies, programmes and projects

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN PARTICIPATING STATES

- a. Support to ratification of key international treaties on gender-related issues
- b. Preventing violence against women
- c. Ensuring women's participation in public and political life
- d. Promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere
- e. Supporting women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction

Key Successes

OSCE SECRETARIAT

In 2023, the OSCE achieved **gender parity** among international staff, with women representing 47 per cent of all international staff across the Organization.



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

Office of the Secretary General Gender Equality

Investing in Women Leadership in Peace and Mediation

Advancing women's meaningful participation in decision-making continues to be at the core of the OSCE's efforts. In December 2021, Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid launched the OSCE Networking Platform for Women's Leaders, including Peacebuilders and Mediators. Several initiatives have been launched by this network, including the Women Peace Leadership Programme (WPLP) and the Young Women for Peace Initiative (YW4P).

The WPLP is a mentorship scheme that pairs **28 talented women from the OSCE region and Afghanistan with internationally renowned women leaders**. The YW4P brings young women's perspectives on peace and security to the fore, ensuring that their voices are heard and their right to be included is respected.



Participants of the Young Women for Peace Initiative at the opening event in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 15 April 2024. (OSCE/Chyngyz Zhanybekov)

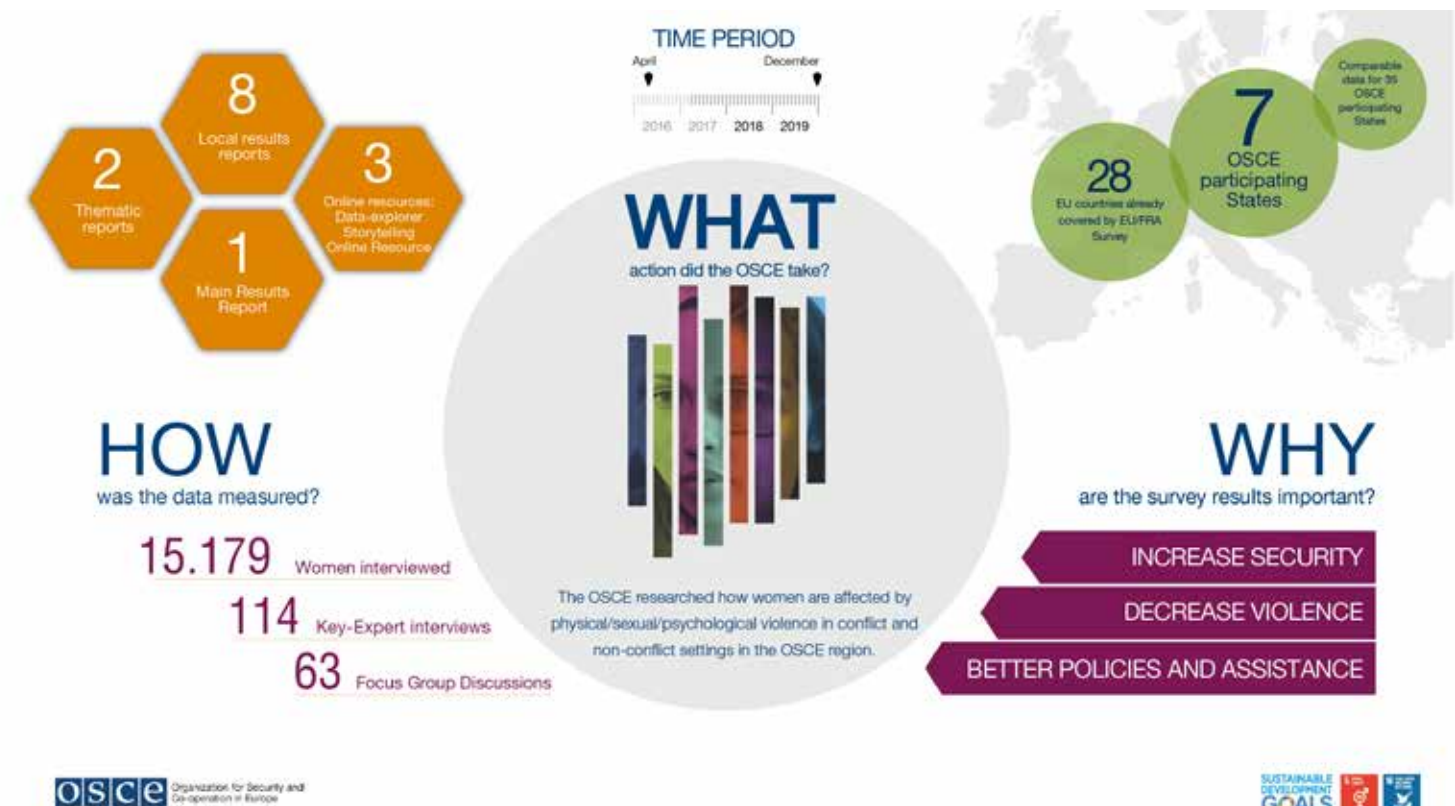


P/C VERLT Networks meeting, Vienna, 20-23 October 2023. (OSCE)

Establishment of Regional Networks for Women Professionals in P/C VERLT

Two new OSCE regional networks of women professionals, committed to the prevention and countering of violent extremism and

radicalization leading to terrorism (P/C VERLT), were established in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe.



Infographic: Overview of the OSCE Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women

[OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women](#): Implemented in 2018 in selected countries in South-Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe, this research examined violence that women experience in conflict and non-conflict settings, as well as the impact violence has on women and girls, including its lasting consequences.

Addressing the link between corruption and gender inequality

Since 2019, the OSCE has conducted pioneering work on the nexus between gender and corruption, mapping and supporting legal and institutional mechanisms for the prevention and prosecution of corrupt practices that primarily affect women, such as sexual extortion. In 2024, the preliminary findings of the [Gender and corruption in the access to natural resources paper](#),

presented at the 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women, provided the first analysis of the impact of corruption on women's access to water, land, forests and extractive industries. In co-operation with the OSCE's field operations, over **100 counterparts** and OSCE staff were trained on gender mainstreaming in anti-corruption programming in Vienna, Tirana and Pristina.

[Engaging Men in Gender Equality at the OSCE: A Toolkit for OSCE Staff](#): Launched in August 2022, this toolkit aims to inspire and guide OSCE staff working in different executive structures in establishing Men for Gender Equality Groups that engage men in the Organization to foster gender equality at their workplace.

Conference and Language Services

Conflict prevention



2014

Vienna, 30 April 2014 (OSCE/Micky Kroell)

Improving gender balance in panels: The OSCE has made significant progress in promoting gender diversity at its

conferences. A notable achievement is the shift from all-male panels to more inclusive panels featuring both women and men.



2024



Vienna, 15 April 2024 (OSCE/Micky Kroell)

Participants of the '21st Staff Course for Women Leaders' working on a group exercise on leadership and management, Dushanbe, 22 May 2018. (OSCE/Shamsi Myadyeva)

Strengthening Women's Role in Security

Through the CPC-led **Response to the Implications of the Situation in Afghanistan on the OSCE Region (RIAOR)** repository programme and framework, the Organization addresses the impacts of the situation in Afghanistan, including gender-related aspects, together with OSCE participating States in Central

Asia. Within the RIAOR framework, the flagship **OSCE Border Management Staff College** in Dushanbe, established in 2009, seeks to strengthen women's role in border agencies across the OSCE region, including in Central Asia, to tackle the constant and ever-evolving challenges emanating from across the Afghan border.



Opening of the OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security training programme, Vienna, 6 November 2023. (OSCE)

Since 2018 the **OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security** training programme on conflict prevention and resolution through arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation empowers youth, in particular women, to become active participants in the field of politico-military security. In 2019, the OSCE Mediation Support Team and Gender Issues Programme launched the first [OSCE Toolkit on Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes](#) with actionable recommendations to improve women's inclusion in all peace and security efforts.

Promoting women's inclusion in peace negotiations

In the context of the OSCE's engagement in the **Geneva International Discussions** since 2020, in close co-operation with the respective Chairpersonships and in support of the Special Representative for the South Caucasus, the OSCE team has followed a structured, regular interaction with conflict-affected women and—through its co-chairing function of this crucial format dealing with the consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia—better supported women's participation in conflict prevention. The OSCE Mission to Moldova, together with the Mediation Support Team and the Gender Issues Programme, also worked to **building capacities and trust among women negotiators in the Transdniestrian Settlement Process**.

Support Programme for Ukraine

Combatting Trafficking and Online Exploitation

Amid the war, the Support Programme for Ukraine continues to support the National Police of Ukraine to strengthen their capacity to investigate crimes related to trafficking in human beings, with a special emphasis on cyber-enabled crimes and online child sexual exploitation. This initiative is particularly impactful for women and children who are disproportionately affected by such crimes. By addressing these gender-specific vulnerabilities, the project is creating a safer environment and improving access to justice. The focus on multi-agency collaboration and practical skill development ensures a more effective and efficient approach to combating these crimes.



Simulation exercise to enhance stakeholder partnerships in addressing human trafficking and supporting victims, Lviv region, 24 April 2024. (OSCE/ Pierre Baussand)

Transnational threats



Participants during the OSCE course on gender-sensitive policing of violence against women and girls in Warsaw, 29 July 2022. (OSCE)

Supporting law enforcement through gender-responsive policing in South-Eastern Europe

Building on the results of the 2019 [OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women](#), the Transnational Threats

Department has [supported law enforcement authorities in South-Eastern Europe](#) by raising awareness and organizing training on gender stereotypes, and the causes and effects of gender-based violence (GBV) among justice practitioners and the public.

Border Security— Inclusive Security for all

Within two years of its establishment in 2017, the OSCE Mediterranean Points of Contact Network in Border Security and Management saw its female membership rise to 30 per cent, owed to the Organization's advocacy on the necessity to engage with women working in border services. These women had a strong impact on the Network by providing their perspective, sharing their challenges and having a voice and seat at the table. One of them is Colonel-Major Zaineab Gharbi, Deputy Director of Air Borders (Tunisia), who joined the Network as Commander in 2018 and was promoted to her current rank thanks to her dedication, expertise and impressive work ethic.



Colonel-Major Zaineab Gharbi, Director of Air Borders, Border Police, Tunisia, during the Inauguration Ceremony with H.E Kais Saied, President of Tunisia, 2024

Economic and environmental activities



Women from the Yaghnob Valley of Tajikistan with a solar parabolic cooker, 25 August 2023

Empowering Women to Lead the Energy Transition in Central Asia and in water management

Since 2022, the OCEEA has **empowered over 400 women in Central Asia to lead the energy transition through mentoring, networking and scholarships**. One success story is that of Kyzhibek Ryszhanova, CEO of a small clean-energy company, who improved her investment

proposal and secured funding from an Austrian investor. She is now realizing her dream of building a solar-hydro hybrid power plant in the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan. The OCEEA, together with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia and the Stockholm International Water Institute, also established the [Women in Water Management Network in Central Asia](#) and Afghanistan, which is considered a best practice in the global water community.

“Empowering women in water diplomacy and recognizing gender dynamics is not just a matter of fairness; it’s a strategic imperative for achieving water security, promoting inclusive governance and building resilient communities”.

Gulzhan Makhmudova, Network Kyrgyzstan

Combating trafficking in human beings

*Women & girls represent 92% of **identified victims** of sex trafficking worldwide.*

Countering the **demand** that fosters trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation plays a **crucial role** in **preventing** THB for sexual exploitation by **disrupting** the **financial incentive** for traffickers to exploit other human beings, in particular women and children.

DISCOURAGING
THE DEMAND
that fosters trafficking for the
purpose of sexual exploitation

June 2021

Promoting Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Combat Human Trafficking

Gender considerations should be inherent to an effective response to trafficking in human beings. Since its early days, the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) has consistently

promoted gender-sensitive approaches to combating human trafficking in line with relevant OSCE commitments, including to prevent violence against women. This work has encompassed policy papers, advocacy, capacity-building and contributions to national and international forums and mechanisms.

Trafficking cases present different gender-markers, as the **needs of victims differ** according to a number of factors, **including** their **gender** and the **form of exploitation** they have been exposed to. These needs **influence** all areas of effective **prevention**, **protection** and **prosecution**.

*To break the trafficking cycle, anti-trafficking responses must be designed in a **gender-sensitive** way.*

Applying Gender-Sensitive
Approaches in Combating
Trafficking in Human Beings

May 2021

Department of Human Resources



PSEA Focal Points Workshop at the Secretariat, Vienna, 15 September 2023. (OSCE)

Enhancing Accountability: OSCE's PSEA Focal Points Initiative

DHR co-ordinated the establishment of the **PSEA Focal Points network**, appointing in each OSCE executive structure a minimum of two PSEA Focal Points, one male and one female. Their responsibilities include serving as reporting channel for receiving SEA complaints and actively contributing to PSEA awareness campaigns.

In collaboration with the OSR/CTHB and the Gender Issues Unit, DHR hosted a dedicated workshop for the newly appointed PSEA Focal Points to equip them with the necessary knowledge and tools essential for effectively fulfilling their roles.

Institutions

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
(ODIHR)



Women's Parliament event in Montenegro, May 2022 (Parliament of Montenegro)

Enhancing gender equality in national parliaments

Since 2016, ODIHR has been supporting national parliaments across the OSCE region to increase their gender sensitivity, helping to ensure they can deliver for all women and men. So far, ODIHR has carried out gender audits of parliaments in Montenegro, North Macedonia, Malta, Kyrgyzstan, Slovenia and Portugal.

As a result, the parliaments of North Macedonia and Montenegro are implementing gender equality action plans that aim to address recommendations from ODIHR's audits and serve as a role model for other democratic institutions in their countries.



Central Election Commission of Albania (Elvis Dako)

Coercive sterilization of Roma women: justice and reparations for victims

Across the OSCE region, Roma women have been subjected to coerced sterilization, which is among the most egregious violations of women's rights. Roma women have fought for many years to obtain compensation for what they have suffered. ODIHR has provided a platform for dialogue between governments, victims of sterilization, and civil society organizations working with them, on access to justice and compensation. The Office has also supported the efforts of Roma women in raising awareness of the problem and advocating for solutions. ODIHR's work in this area led to the adoption of compensation legislation in the Czech Republic.



A gender audit toolkit for election administrations

ODIHR conducted pioneering gender audits of the election administrations in North Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro between 2020 and 2022. Drawing on ODIHR's previous experience, a gender audit toolkit was developed to assess the gender-responsiveness of election administrations across all 57 OSCE participating States. As a public authority, the election administration should be representative of wider society, and it has primary responsibility for ensuring inclusive participation in elections. Conducting gender audits of election management bodies is a good practice for ensuring that women and men benefit equally from the work of the election administration and the electoral process overall.

Increasing gender equality in Ukraine

ODIHR helped found the Ukrainian Gender Advisers Network, in partnership with Ukraine's Commissioner for Gender Policy. Since its establishment in 2021, the network has proved its relevance and continued to promote the development of gender-sensitive policies at both regional and national level. ODIHR supported the network's efforts to carry out training and encourage networking, helping to empower the network's participants in their work. In September 2023, ODIHR organized a study visit to the Czech Republic for 20 Ukrainian gender advisers, where they learned about innovative approaches and policies that can be adapted for use in their country, including at times of war.

Elena Gorolova, Roma women's rights defender and advocate
(Yan Renelt)

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)



The Gender Lunch hosted by the OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Dr. Hedy Fry at the 30th Annual Session of the OSCE PA in Vancouver. 2 July 2023 (OSCE PA/Anna Di Domenico)

Gender Lunch as an integral part of OSCE PA Annual Sessions

The Gender Lunch, initiated by the OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, is a key event at the OSCE PA's Annual Sessions. As the only side event focused entirely on gender issues, it brings together parliamentarians for discussions on promoting gender equality within the Organization and OSCE national parliaments.

The event raises visibility and awareness, inspiring further action and commitment to gender equality within participating States and support for the OSCE PA's resolutions on women's rights.

High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)



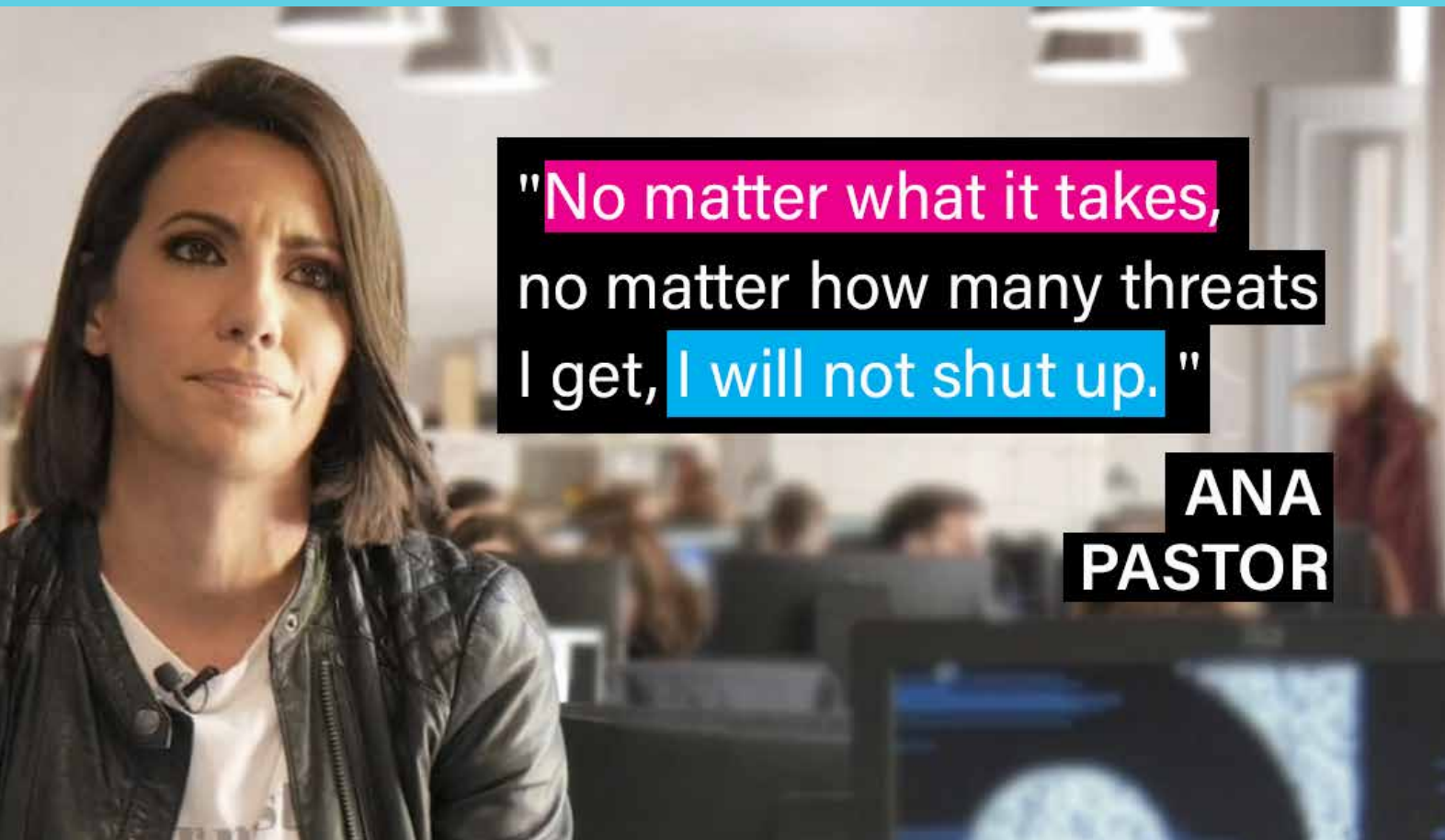
Schoolchildren during a class at a school piloting multilingual education, Jalal-Abad, 4 September 2014. (OSCE/Eric Gourlan)

Multilingual education: Creating equal chances for everyone

Evidence collected by the HCNM's office from its programmes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan illustrates the transformative impact of multilingual education. In these countries, tailored education policies that include instruction in multiple languages have been linked to a decrease in the rates of early marriage among girls. This shift is attributed to improved educational outcomes and

enhanced awareness of gender rights, which empower young women and their families to make more informed choices about their futures. As such, multilingual education contributes to young people, including minority women and girls, having increasingly equal opportunities to play an active role in their societies.

Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM)



Excerpt from the documentary "A Dark Place" (2018), directed by Javier Luque. Quote from journalist Ana Pastor

Empowering Women in Media

The Safety of Female Journalists Online (#SOFJO) is the RFOM's longest-running project, initiated in 2015. As the sole gender-focused initiative, it strives to promote gender equality in the media. #SOFJO is dedicated to preventing violence against women and fostering their active involvement in public life. It specifically addresses online violence against female journalists, offering resources and guidelines to create

a safer online environment. By involving women in research, policy formulation and public speaking, #SOFJO empowers them to become agents of change. This project not only works to prevent violence but also enhances women's leadership and participation in the media and public discourse.

Field Operations

Mission to Moldova



Gender Bridge Hubs activities on gender equality, conflict resolution in partnerships, available protection services, Chisinau, Gender-Centru, 2022.

Empowering Youth for Gender Equality

Since 2017, the Mission has supported awareness-raising activities through the creation of **Gender Hubs** that focus on promoting gender equality and healthy family lifestyles in vocational schools and universities, covering especially rural areas across both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River. To build an inclusive, open and safe society, starting with the engagement of young citizens, the Mission conducted various training sessions for vocational schoolteachers on how to break persistent

gender stereotypes. The Mission also developed a Gender Bridge Hub handbook on GBV identification, referrals using legal and regulatory mechanisms, and psychological first aid for educational professionals to integrate gender mainstreaming through education into their work. The national ownership of efforts towards the eradication of GBV is gradually increasing during the implementation of the Mission's projects, engaging local authorities and NGOs on both banks.

Presence in Albania

Empowering Women's Political Participation

The Presence played a pivotal role in 2018–2020 putting together a proposal anchoring gender equality in the electoral code. Co-ordinating and promoting recommendations of an ad hoc Working Group on Gender Equality and Women, the 2020 amendments to the Electoral Code included a gender quota. The move created an environment conducive to increased political participation of women, with the result that in the

2023 local elections 677 councillor seats (42 per cent) were won by women. The Presence has long focused on political representation and empowerment of women on the local level. Since 2019, the Presence has championed the OSCE Women's Municipal Excellence Programme, tailored to increasing capacities and facilitating participation and networking opportunities for women engaged in local politics. More than 80 women councillors have joined this programme so far.

Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Empowering Women in Politics

The Mission was a main driver for the introduction of a 30 per cent quota of women representation in the Election Law of BiH adopted in 1997. This took the participation of women in parliaments from below five per cent to 30 per cent in the 1998 state-level elections. The Mission's engagement continues, with a focus on working with the

main political parties and improving statutes and election rules, introduction of party voluntary quotas, development of gender action plans, and capacity-building for female candidates. In 2024, with the Mission's facilitation, 10 major political parties agreed jointly on Principles for the Engagement of Political Parties in Eliminating Violence against Women.

Mission in Kosovo

Advancing Women's Rights and Opportunities in Kosovo

Since its earliest days the Mission has been working to improve the position of women in Kosovo. Through supporting legislation that ensures gender representation on ballot papers, gender-responsive municipal budgets and equal inheritance rights, it provided women with more **opportunities** to be heard and contribute to society. In 2005, the Mission helped establish a women's

caucus in the Kosovo Assembly and supported its work to include the Istanbul Convention in the Constitution and **to draft the first law on violence against women**. Most recently, the Mission's awareness-raising workshops on inheritance and property ownership rights reached hundreds of women from different communities and **contributed to 8,137 women registering property in 2023 (compared to 104 in 2016)**.

Mission to Serbia

Fostering Dialogue: Ten years of the Dialogue Academy for Young Women

Since 2014, the Mission to Serbia and the Mission in Kosovo have supported the OSCE Dialogue Academy for Young Women from Belgrade and Prishtinë/Priština, enabling critical exchanges on women's roles in conflict mediation and reconciliation. The OSCE offers a platform for young women

to overcome communication barriers, deconstruct stereotypes and engage in constructive exchanges through peer learning, coaching and mentoring. It aims to build relationships among young women from diverse communities, focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment. The **Alumni network counts over 200 participants** who act as change-makers in their respective societies and in the region.



Meeting of Presidents of Women's Forums and representatives of biggest political parties, Sarajevo, 4 June 2024. (OSCE Mission to BiH/Zejd Kadric)



Participants of the 9th edition of the OSCE Dialogue Academy for Young Women hold their certificates of completion. Struga, North Macedonia, 15 October 2023. (OSCE/Fitim Xharra)



Conference of Serbia's Women Parliamentary Network, a cross-party network of women parliamentarians, gathering women MPs, local councilors, and national minority councils' representatives at a joint session, Belgrade, 15 December 2017. (OSCE/Milan Obradovic)

20 years of gender equality mechanisms in parliament

In 2013, following the introduction of gender representation quotas, the Mission to Serbia in partnership with local civil society supported the formation of the cross-party informal Women's Parliamentary Network (WPN) in the National Assembly (at the time involving all 83 women MPs). The MPs in

the WPN worked to empower women in politics at the local level and successfully steered the advancement of gender equality policy in Serbia, including through the early adoption of the Istanbul Convention in 2013, **introduction of gender-sensitive budgeting in 2015** and continuous advocacy for the **Law on Gender Equality, finally adopted in 2021**.



Mission to Skopje

Promoting gender equality and inclusion in the police force

In 2018, the Mission to Skopje introduced a Gender Mentoring Programme to promote gender equality and inclusion in the police force. Since the programme's inception, over **150 police officers** have been trained, leading to **a 5.3 per cent increase of women in senior management positions within the police**. In 2023, the programme was handed over to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, marking a significant milestone in its operation and transferring responsibility for its continued implementation and oversight.

Police Training Centre students and Suza Trajkovska, Assistant Minister and Director of the Police Training Centre under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of North Macedonia.

Centre in Ashgabat



Participants successfully completing the seminar on ethics and psychology of family relations organized by "Keyik Okara", Ashgabat 2018

15 Years of Empowerment: OSCE and Keyik Okara's Efforts Against Domestic Violence

For over 15 years, the Centre in Ashgabat has partnered with the NGO Keyik Okara to provide support and protection to the survivors of GBV, including legal, psychological and financial support, provided through a hotline and a shelter.

Since the launch of the project, Keyik Okara conducts annual seminars on the ethics and psychology of family relations. More than **200 people have participated in a total of 25 seminars targeting women**, youth and government officials since 2018.

Programme Office in Bishkek



International Conference on the Global Agenda “Women, Peace, and Security: Problems and Development Prospects”, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 06 June 2023. (OSCE/Gennady Kornienko)

Empowering Women in Kyrgyzstan

The Programme Office in Bishkek (POiB) has prioritized increasing women’s political participation in Kyrgyzstan, leading to the establishment of a 30% gender quota in Parliament and local councils in 2019. Since then, the proportion of women in local councils has nearly quadrupled. The POiB has also trained women nationwide, including rural areas, on running for office and governing effectively. Over 70 women trained by POiB have been elected as local councillors, earning the Office the 2021 Gender Champions Award.

In 2017, the POiB supported the establishment of the first Kyrgyz Association of Women in the Security Sector and, in 2023, supported this body in organizing a high-level event on Women, Peace, and Security: Problems and Development Prospects in Bishkek, with the participation of Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid and Kyrgyz First Deputy Minister of the Interior Adylbek Biybosunov. During the event, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Association and the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future, to empower women in the security sector through research and joint projects.

Programme Office in Dushanbe



A group of women and girls take part in self-defence training at an OSCE-supported Women’s Resource Centre in Kulyab, Tajikistan, 1 August 2013. (OSCE/Mavjuda Gaffurova)

Empowering Women: OSCE’s Support for Women’s Resource Centres in Tajikistan

Since 2004, the OSCE has supported a network of Women’s Resource Centres (WRCs) across Tajikistan, offering vulnerable women in remote areas psychosocial counselling, legal advice, and vocational training. The WRCs contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the public and private spheres, including human trafficking and all forms of exploitation.

IMPACT

14 WRCs

Since 2004, **26,800** victims (**92%** women) reached

80,620 legal and **73,620** psychological consultations provided

27,960 vocational training graduates; **97%** found jobs and income

333,580 community members learned about healthy relationships, VAWG, and improved communication

Programme Office in Astana



Programme Office in Astana
"Empowering Survivors: Addressing Human Trafficking and Gender-Based Violence" (POiA Akbota Sarzhanova)

Empowering Survivors: Addressing Human Trafficking and Gender-Based Violence

To respond to a 40 per cent rise in domestic violence cases in Kazakhstan during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Programme Office in Astana championed a multi-year initiative to protect survivors of GBV and human trafficking. As this is a huge burden for state shelters to address alone, the

Programme Office assisted 13 private crisis centres across eight regions of Kazakhstan with expert services, enabling shelters to offer comprehensive legal, social and psychological support to 3,594 persons affected by domestic violence and human trafficking.

Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan



Award ceremony following a micro-business training (OSCE)

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

Since 2021, the Project Co-ordinator has contributed to training over 2,000 women on micro-business development in Uzbekistan. This project was designed during the COVID-19 pandemic to help generate household income. It supports women's self-employment in Uzbekistan's regions by deploying digital tools and facilitating a social

entrepreneurial start-up called Coozin. Initially launched for homemade food sales, this digital initiative now includes a marketplace and an educational platform to convey business, marketing, sales and other key skills, with the aim of expanding its range of services beyond the culinary field.

OSCE Secretariat

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

Email: equality@osce.org
www.osce.org/secretariat/gender
